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["MR. VERNON IS NOT WORTH YOUR REGRETS. BEFORE HE EVER SAW YOUR FACE HE WAS ENGAGED TO ANOTHER GIRL!"]

THE MYSTERY OF ALANDYKE.

PROLOGUE.

In all the wide county of Yorkshire it would have been hard to find a fairer estate than Alandyke, which for centuries had been in the possession of the Leighs. The beautiful old mansion stood in a well-wooded park; from the many windows were picturesque views of the Yorkshire moors; the turf was smooth as velvet, the trees were of splendid growth; everything nature and art could furnish adorned Alandyke, and yet a shadow rested over the place—the gossip whispered darkly that a curse was on it.

Yet Sir Jocelyn Leigh had never wronged a creature on his estate; no one could have laid an act of cruelty to his charge. He was not a popular man; he was a "Southerner" as the country folk denominated all who came from the region beyond their own north country, and he had taken the place of the heir of Alandyke, who had been the idol of his father's

tenantry—there was the beginning and end of his offence.

At this time the Baronet was a grave, stern-faced man, not very far from forty. He was the last of his line; his wife slept in the village churchyard; there were only two little girls in the stately nursery, yet he showed no inclination to seek another helpmeet. He moved freely in all the society of the county, his sister filled his house with guests. Now and again it was rumoured this or that high born maiden or graceful widow was to be Lady Leigh, but the time passed on until five winters' snows had covered his wife's grave, and yet he had asked no other woman to fill her place.

Sir Jocelyn had a reason for thus disappointing the hopes of manoeuvring mothers. He carried with him night and day a secret he had never disclosed to any living creature, and which was already lining his face with furrows and sowing threads of silver among his black hair. The master of Alandyke had a hidden care, a skeleton in his closet invisible to all others, and yet ever present with him. He will reveal it himself in this story.

Three scenes of his life were ever returning to his mind. The first, he remembered himself a boy at Eton—a boy with not too much pocket-money or too many friends—summoned to the presence of a grave old man with a face of great resolution and an expression of indomitable pride.

"So you are Jocelyn's boy—will you be my son?"

He had looked up at his questioner as though to ask if he had heard aright. He knew his kinsman had a son of his own, a pleasant, gallant officer, whom, boy-like, he had ardently admired. There was no change in Sir Kenneth's face as he repeated his question.

"It rests with you, Jocelyn, to be my heir—the prop and stay of my old age."

The youth had consented; from that day his position changed. He knew the sweets of wealth; instinctively others taught him his new advantages; he was treated as a rich man's heir and the only penalty he had to pay for it was a two months' continental tour with his cousin every autumn. That went on until he was twenty-one, when, for the first time, Sir

Kenneth took him to Alandyke. And the second scene was there.

A splendid entertainment was held in honour of his coming of age. The noblest names for miles round were on Sir Kenneth's visiting list, but young Jocelyn knew instinctively the guests bidden in his honour had little good-feeling for him. There was a coldness in their faces, a reserve in their greeting which cut him to the heart.

It was winter, the snow lay on the ground in thick, white masses. At midnight a strange stir arose among the guests; one whispered to the other, then General Breadalbane himself accosted Sir Kenneth.

"There has been an accident! A poor man has lost his footing in the snow. My coachman found him, and has brought him here."

"Quite right, quite right! I hope the doctor has been sent for." Still there was that undefined murmur, and at last one bolder than the others turned to the Baronet.

"You will not refuse to see him? He is asking for you."

Sir Kenneth yielded, little suspecting what his friends knew so well. He crossed the ball-room to the hall, and followed the housekeeper to the room where the rescued man had been carried. He was too late. As he reached the bed there was a slight movement, a gasp for breath, a murmured exclamation of "my father!" and then all was over.

It was even so. Hungry, poverty-stricken, footsore, the true heir had returned like a prodigal to his home to find it full of rejoicings in honour of him who had usurped his place. Weary and weak from illness he had lost his footing, and, but for the discovery of the General's coachman, might not even have died in his own home.

What had he come for? What had seduced him to see to the father who had cast him off?

No one over knew. Sir Kenneth showed no sign of emotion. At young Jocelyn's earnest request he allowed the guests to be dismissed, but he refused to tell his heir the reason he had parted with his son—his only son. He refused to hazard any conjecture as to the young man's return after those seven years of weary exile.

Jocelyn never forgot that scene. He followed his jackless kinsman to the grave with a sore heart. He was a generous nature, and he pitied the exiled son truly; but he was sad also for himself, for he knew perfectly well that, in the eyes of all his neighbours, he was nothing better than a heartless usurper.

After that Alandyke was closed. Sir Kenneth and his heir travelled incessantly for three years; but the Baronet aged rapidly, and he begged of Jocelyn to marry, that he might see his children before he died. Mr. Leigh was nothing loth. He chose the penniless daughter of an English earl, who had nothing in the world but a long pedigree and brilliant beauty to recommend her.

Sir Kenneth was delighted; it was a union after his own heart. The family went home to Alandyke, and for a time all seemed to prosper with them.

But soon after his first child was born Mr. Leigh went abroad for a short tour, and in his absence his benefactor died, tenderly watched over and cheered by the Lady Alberta. When Jocelyn came home to resume his honours, he thought a strange change had come to his wife. She was restless and nervous, she seemed to start at every sound, and to dread the sight of strangers. She had been a beauty; she sank into a sallow, fretful invalid. Jocelyn humoured her in all things; he had long found out his marriage was a mistake, and that the Lady Alberta could contribute little to his happiness; but he bore with her patiently. He waited on her until he almost fancied he cared for her, and that the light of his life was going out when the doctors told him he must lose her.

And now comes the last of the three scenes which haunted our baronet. It was five years after Sir Kenneth's death, a mild unheathy winter, when there was much

sickness in the neighbourhood. Many children died of low fever, and among them the only boy who had been given to Sir Jocelyn and his wife. That loss was Lady Alberta's death-blow; she had been an invalid for years. When her boy's funeral was over it was evident to all she was dying.

"It was for his sake I did it!" she would moan in her delirium to her husband, "it was for his sake, and Heaven has killed him to punish me; Jocelyn, don't you understand? I am your child's murderer, why don't you give me up to justice and have me hung."

"My poor girl!" and her husband's arms were round her as tenderly as if she had been his life's love, "you are talking wildly; nothing in this world killed our boy. God wanted him and took him to Himself."

Lady Alberta shivered.

"But I did it, Jocelyn! You were away; there was no one knew it but me. The temptation was so terrible. I had felt poverty before I married you and I dreaded it. Besides, there was Harold, my darling, my bonny boy!"

And when at last her husband gleaned the truth of these wild ravings, when he learned what she had done, the iron entered into his soul. People often said Sir Jocelyn never looked the same after his wife's death. They little suspected the awful legacy of shame and trouble she had left behind her. It was not grief for his wife and little son that lined the Baronet's face, and sewed silver threads among his hair; it was shame, bitter humiliating shame, for a wrong done in his name he was powerless to right. He was by nature true of heart, honourable, upright. It seemed to him after listening to the Lady Alberta's ravings that he could never again lift up his head, or face the presence of his fellow-men, and it was his wife who had brought upon him this fearful dishonour—his wife, whose truth he had never doubted, who was a daughter of one of England's noblest families!

CHAPTER I.

Who among the dwellers in suburban London south of the river Thames does not know Camberwell—Camberwell, with its numberless streets, its houses of every size and grade, from the noble mansions of Herne-hill to the narrow, winding labyrinth round the canal?

Somewhere in this bustling suburb there stood at the time of this story, and probably stands now, a narrow road which leads nowhere, whose termination is a high brick wall, and which consists of half-a-dozen semi-detached houses, rejoicing from the name of their builder in the unromantic title of Bilby-road.

Bilby-road thoroughly deserves its name, in that there is nothing romantic about it. No picturesque poverty, no love in a cottage, seeks a refuge in Bilby-road. The six houses are invariably inhabited by men who are "something in the City," and whose bustling wives let off a few rooms, varying from one to three, to persons usually of better birth and smaller means than themselves.

The parlours of No. 6 were inhabited by a widow lady and her two daughters; and one snowy December afternoon the girls sat in the front room very near the apology for a fire, eagerly discussing ways and means. The elder could not have been twenty, the younger was perhaps sixteen. It was easy to see from their dress that both knew the sting of poverty, and yet the harshest critic could not have applied the words plain or uninteresting to either of them. There was little resemblance between them. One was a pretty child, careless, impulsive, wilful; the other, despite her youth, a woman, with a woman's love and a woman's power of suffering.

"It's no use, Nell," and the younger girl laid her head half wearily on her sister's lap. "I'm tired to death of everything. How can anyone be cheerful when they're as poor as we are, when every year things seem getting

worse and worse! I declare I wish something would happen; I shouldn't much care what."

Nell, otherwise Helena Stuart, listened in perfect silence to this outburst; when it was over she put one hand caressingly on the bowed head.

"If only papa had lived, Bee, things would have been so different."

"But he didn't," remarked Bee, who was very practical. "He died when you were four years old, before I can remember," with a little sigh; "and we have lived here half my life, till it really seems to me we shall never live anywhere else."

"Patience, little one."

"It's all very well for you," retorted Bee. "You are hardly ever at home; you are always in other people's houses giving music lessons."

"It isn't very pleasant work sometimes, Bee."

"At any rate, it must be better than staying at home and listening to mamma's lamentations. I'm sure, Nell, she makes me almost count the bits of coal I put on the fire, and she tells me nineteen times a day she hopes I shall never marry a gentleman, as if I should ever marry anyone at all shut up here."

A brilliant bluish dyed Nella's pale cheeks. For one moment she was silent, then she said, slowly,—

"How would you like to take my place, Bee, after Christmas?"

"Your place!" gasped the child. "What do you mean, Nell? People wouldn't have me."

"I think they would. You are very clever, Bee, and you look older than your age. Oh, yes, I don't think there would be any difficulty."

"But you?" asked Bee, struck with remorse at her own selfishness. Somehow she could not fancy Nell humouring their mother's foibles, and fighting pitched battles with the landlady, as was her daily portion.

"I!—Oh, I should go away."

"Go away! You couldn't and leave me behind. Why, Nell, I'd rather be poor all my days than lose you."

"It would only be for a little time," said the other girl, in a sort of choked voice; "all would come right in time. Oh! Bee, I can't explain any more now, you must trust me."

Beatrice looked troubled.

"I always trust you," she said, simply. "But oh, Nell, you have grown terribly mysterious lately!"—then as her sister started up—"you are never going out? It is past five o'clock; you can't have any lessons to give now."

"No, but I must go. Give mother her tea, and don't wait for me; I may be late."

She went into the next room and put on a small black straw hat; she arranged her mantle with skilful hands. True, the hat was plain and unfashionable; the cloth jacket had seen good service, and yet Nell looked a lady—she could have looked nothing else.

She had not the beauty of her younger sister, but her face had a charm all its own; her hair was of that strange uncommon tint which people never can describe and call indifferently auburn, and copper-coloured. She had large, lustrous, grey eyes, a fair, creamy complexion, regular features, and a sylph-like figure. She was only a music teacher. Her employers thought her instructions well repaid at two shillings an hour, and yet there was a nameless something in her manner better suited to a lady of high degree than to the needy lodger in the parlours of No. 6, Bilby-road, Camberwell.

The church clock was striking six as she passed out into the darkness of the December night. She carried no roll of music, no insignia of her calling. She walked on with a set, steady pace, as one certain of her purpose. On and on she walked with a strange hope at her heart, conquering fatigue and cold until she reached a bustling railway station, more than a mile from Bilby-road. She went into the waiting-room, and stood warming her poor numbed hands before the cheerful fire.

She had no time for doubt's, no aching suspense to bear. She had not been there a moment when a hand was laid upon her shoulder and the voice dearest to her on earth replied,—

"I thought you would not fail me; but what a night it is, my darling? You must be half frozen."

"It was very cold, but I did not mind," her face almost radiant as she looked at him. "I knew you would be here; and, oh! Guy, I have wanted you so badly."

The waiting-room was empty; it was on the main-line platform, and but few trains stopped at that time in the evening. People often wondered what the use of a waiting-room was at that particular spot, but Helena Stuart and Guy Vernon regarded it as a peculiar blessing to themselves.

It was the old, old story. He was rich and she was poor. He had met her on one memorable evening at a friend's, whose sister was one of her pupils. He had loved her at first sight, and being one who rarely denies himself anything he longed for, he had spent many hours with her since, and employed them in teaching her how to love him. Knowing that it was well-nigh impossible he should ever marry her, he had deliberately set himself to win the treasure of her love—he thought nothing of the heartache that must be her after portion.

And things had been going on thus for six months. It had been summer when they met; it was winter now, and in that half year Nell had learnt to hold Guy Vernon dearer than aught on earth. She had met him often, and no one knew it; he filled her thoughts waking and sleeping, yet she had never breathed his name to mother or sister.

"You are trembling," he said, fondly, as he put her on a seat and placed himself at her side. "Little Nell, what troubles you?"

For an answer she burst into tears. Mr. Vernon looked annoyed; he had a very troublesome communication to make to her that evening, and tears were hardly a suitable introduction.

"What is it, Nell?"

"I don't know," sobbed the girl; "only I am so weary of all this deceit. Guy, shall I never see you openly, as other girls see their lovers? Must we always go on plotting and scheming just for a few moments together?"

Guy Vernon did not answer her. He was a strikingly handsome man of five or six-and-twenty, with dark, expressive, blue eyes and clearly cut aristocratic features, but his mouth was weak and a little cruel, his blue eyes had a strange wavering gaze.

"Don't be unreasonable," he said, a little sharply. "You know if I were my own master there should be an end of this secrecy to-morrow. I would marry you openly in the light of day, but now I daren't offend my father. I am utterly at his mercy; he could cut me off with a shilling if he liked."

"But how is it to end?" asked the girl, hopelessly. "Guy, I can't go on long like this; the suspense, the dreadful uncertainty, is killing me."

"I love you, Nell," he said, quickly. "I love you more than anyone in the world!"

She looked into his eyes with a great tenderness in her own, as she answered,—

"And I love you better than life."

"Then why seek to change things? We can meet pretty often; no one is the wiser. We don't want any outsiders to share our happiness."

"You don't understand," her voice was full of pain. "I can't go on like this—I can't."

"Why not?"

"Don't you see my life is an acted lie. My mother and Bee think I have extra pupils. They pity me for being overworked. They have no idea that—"

"What does it matter?" he interrupted her. "Let them think what they like, to that they don't suspect the real thing."

She started.

"But it is not true."

"You harp too much on truth, little Nell."

"It's the one thing worth having."

"Is it? What about love? I used to think you deemed my love worth having."

His arm was round her, her head rested on his shoulder, and again and again he pressed his lips to hers.

"I wish I was a rich man, Nell, we would be married to-morrow."

His private income was six hundred a-year. It had come to him from his mother, and nothing could rob him of it. The half would have been riches to Nell, but she could not say so.

"I wanted to tell you," she said, gently freeing herself from his embrace; "things can't go on like this, you must let me tell them."

"Whom?"

"My mother and Bee."

"As well put it in the newspapers."

"They would keep the secret. Oh, Guy, I can't go on as I am, it hurts me so. I never had a secret before in my life. You must let me tell them."

"And if I refuse?"

After all, she was very proud. She might be poor, and toil hard for daily bread, but she was as sensitive and refined as any high-bred lady, and she had come out this night resolved that, one way or another, the miserable entanglement she had been led into must cease—either her engagement must be announced, or she would give up the love she had found so sweet.

"And if I refuse?"

She never hesitated.

"Then everything must be over between us."

"Nell!"

"Yes," she said, hoarsely; "I cannot bear this any longer. I love you, Guy. It will break my heart, I think, to lose you, but I cannot continue this terrible deception. It seems to me I am always acting falsehoods."

Guy Vernon looked at her strangely.

"I thought you loved me?"

"I do love you, Heaven only knows how much."

"Yet you cast me off?"

"Not willingly. Oh, Guy, let me tell my mother; our secret will be safe with her. Your father need never hear it."

But he was thoroughly angry.

"No, I will choose my own time. If you do not love me well enough to wait, the responsibility of our rupture rests with you."

She took out of her pocket a little leather case filled with letters, a photograph, and a gold mizpah ring. She placed them silently on the table; then before Guy had understood her purpose she left the room.

He was sorry then. He loved her as much as it was in his nature to love anyone, but his father's estates were heavily mortgaged, and he had been brought up to the understanding that he must marry an heiress. The heiress was even now awaiting him at Vernon Grange, and he had come out to-night with the full intention of breaking off with Nell; but, somehow, now that the girl had taken the law into her own hands, he regretted it. How lovely she looked as she turned away from him! After all, no other woman would ever love him as she had done. An instinct told him he had cast aside the happiness of his life.

"If she had only been a little richer," he muttered, "or her family more presentable; but what would the governor have said? I suppose I'm well out of it, and yet, hang it, I feel as if I'd lost something I should never find again. Oh, Nell, why did we ever meet if things were to go on like this?"

He quite forgot that it was by his own device they had to go. He quite forgot how he had waylaid Miss Stuart all through the long summer evenings; how he had devoted time and trouble to the one object of teaching her to love him. Was it her fault, poor girl, if she had learned the lesson too well?

Guy Vernon lingered over the waiting-room fire for more than half an hour. He had a strange, dim fancy Nell might yet return to him. At last the clock chimed nine—he knew then that it was useless. A page in his life's

story had closed for ever. He swept the letters and ring into his pocket, then he left the room slowly and lingeringly, as one leaves the grave of some loved friend. All that was best and noblest in Guy's nature died out that night.

Nell walked on with a kind of dull leaden sensation at her heart. She seemed to have lost all sense of pain or anguish; she was only conscious of a heavy oppressive feeling, almost as though a stone had been given her instead of that useful organ generally supposed to reside in a woman's left side.

"He never loved me," thought the poor girl to herself, "and, oh! I would have died for him. Guy, how could you do it? You won my heart for the playing of an hour. Oh, it was cruel, cruel!"

She could not go home; the one thing she could not do was to face her mother's lamentations over her strange ways (so Mrs. Stuart always denoted her elder daughter's habits), and Bee's anxious efforts to keep the peace. No, clearly home was no place for her; she could not go on living day after day in those narrow rooms and keep her secret. It would drive her mad to see constantly the streets she had threaded at Guy Vernon's side. She must go away quickly—only where?

She had not spoken idly to Bee that afternoon; she really believed if she could get an appointment as resident governess Bee could replace her in the music teaching. For many reasons Nell longed to be away; her mother's tongue was sharp and cruel, and if ever an inkling of the cause of her daughter's depression came to her she would be merciless; besides, unfortunately, there was a prosperous builder in Chamberwell, the fortunate owner of the whole of Bilby-road, who had professed himself struck with Miss Stuart's attractions, and whom the widow fondly believed she could secure as a son-in-law with but little effort.

"I must go away," decided Nell, putting one hand to her head to stay its aching, "I am quite sure of that. I will tell mother to-morrow. The only question is where?"

Oa, how she longed for her father! She had been but four years old when he left them, but she remembered him perfectly. She had been his idol; even now she could recall his fondness for her and her baby sister. They had been very poor even then, and he had gone out one night without bidding them good-bye—gone to seek his fortune, he told them, smiling. That was fifteen years ago, and he had never returned. Mrs. Stuart believed him dead; little Beatrice had been brought up in the belief. Friends and acquaintances were always told the pretty, faded woman was a widow. Only the elder girl believed, yet faintly, he might return; true hope deferred almost made her heart sick, but she had never quite given up the wonderful possibility.

She stood on the station step, wondering just a little how it was that in all that bustling world there seemed no place for her, when a lady came out, her warm fur cloak brushing against Nell's well-worn jacket.

"Way, it's Miss Stuart! What are you doing out alone at this time of night, my dear?" changing her voice as she saw the look of set misery upon the girl's white face. "Is there anything the matter?"

Nell tried to smile and answer her, but the smile was sadder far than tears, and the words were inaudible.

"I'm sure you are not fit to walk to Bilby-road," said the lady, kindly. "Come home with me; the girls will all be in bed, and you and I will have our supper cozy together. I'll send a servant home with you afterwards."

She was the principal of a flourishing school, and Nell's very grandest patroness, would never have done to offend her; besides, the girl's heart warmed to the kindness. She followed Mrs. Ward to the cab which lady had chartered in perfect silence.

Neither of them spoke on the journey; only when the cab stopped at Acacia House, Mrs.

Ward told the man to wait for a note she wanted taken, and leaving Nell before a cosy fire she retired to write it.

She came back in about ten minutes with her things off. Very gently she unfastened Nell's jacket, and chafed the cold fingers in her warm ones; not till then did the girl look up and say faintly,—

"How kind you are!"

"You are just tired out," said her hostess. "I have sent word to Mrs. Stuart I shall keep you all night, so she won't be alarmed. I am quite sure you are not fit to walk through all this snow."

The young music teacher tried to thank her, but the words died away.

"There, there, you mustn't speak till you've had some supper. You've no more colour in you than a snowflake."

The supper came and went, but the colour did not return to Nell's cheeks. Then Mrs. Ward drew a low chair up to the fire, and said, gently,—

"My dear, I can see you are in trouble. Can I be of any use to you? Can I help you?"

Nell, who was seated at her feet, shook her head faintly.

"No one can help me; no one in all the world."

"I think I can, Miss Stuart. Do you know I saw you in the waiting-room to-night, and I think I can tell pretty well what troubles you."

Nell's cheeks burnt.

"My dear," said the other woman, simply, "I am only a schoolmistress, but I can see things pretty plainly. Mr. Vernon is not worth your regrets; before he ever saw your face he was engaged to another girl."

"Is it true?"

"It is quite true. My husband was vicar of his father's parish. Lord Vernon has shown me much kindness. I have a great respect for him. I wish I could say as much for his son."

Nell looked at her with a dumb, questioning gaze.

"It was settled years ago, but his *fiancée* is very young, and so it was arranged that she should remain quietly with her guardian while Mr. Vernon saw the world."

Nell shuddered.

"And I thought he loved me!"

"You must never meet him again," said her mentor; "for your own sake, you must never meet him again as you have done to-night."

"Oh, no, we parted to-night—for ever."

"Poor child, it hurts you."

"I think it has broken my heart." "Oh, Mrs. Ward, I wish I could die!"

"Hush! you mustn't say that. You are so young, only nineteen. Life may hold much happiness for you, my dear child."

"I shall never be happy again. I shall be reminded of him at every hour. How can I forget him in the place where he taught me to love him?"

"It would be difficult," musingly. "I suppose your mother would not like you to leave home?"

"I don't believe she'd mind. Mamma doesn't love me much. Bee is her darling."

Mrs. Ward pondered a little.

"I think it would be best for you to go. Why not enter some family as resident governess. You would at least have change of scene."

Nell shook her head.

"I have no one to recommend me; such things are hard to find, and we are so poor I could never manage the dresses."

Mrs. Ward put one hand on hers.

"I took a fancy to you the first time I saw you," she said, kindly. "I had one daughter of my own once; had she lived she might have been your age. For her sake, Helena, will you bary your pride, and let me help you."

"Willingly. I don't think I could be proud with you; you have always been so good to me."

Nell went home the next day a little graver,

a little quieter, than before, but with no other sign of the revolution that had swept away her hopes. She told Bee simply she meant to go away from home, and Mrs. Ward was advertising for a situation for her. Bee was half bewildered at the news. She could not bear the thought of losing Nell; but it would certainly be charming to take Nell's place.

Mrs. Stuart's reception of the news was very different.

"You always were a disappointment to me, and you always will be. Why can't you marry Mr. Bilby, and settle down respectably?"

"Mother, dear, teaching is very respectable," put in Bee, trying to defend her sister; "and Mr. Bilby's face is so red; besides, he drops all his h's. I'm sure Nell would be wretched with him."

"If your father had had a few more pounds and a few less h's, I might have been left better off," retorted the widow. "I'm sure if my poor pa, who was in the public line, and very genteel, could see the way his Mary Ann is left, it would be enough to make him turn in his grave."

"I think I'm glad grandfather isn't alive!" said Bee, mischievously to her sister, when their mother had gone to bewail her woes in her own room. "I don't fancy we should like a relation in the public line, Nell, however genteel he might be!"

"I am sure we shouldn't."

Then began three weeks of alternate hopes and fears. Mrs. Ward advertised lavishly, and answers came occasionally; but when people saw Helena's delicate face and fragile form they never wished to engage her. Some honestly thought her too delicate; others did not care to have a governess whose refinement surpassed their own. Christmas was passed; when one cold, bleak, frosty morning, Nell received a highly perfumed and created note, saying briefly the Lady Daryl would beglad to see A. B. C. that afternoon at three o'clock.

Bee was almost beside herself.

"A real lady of title! Nell, don't you feel a bit elated? Fancy if you lived in a nobleman's family!"

Nell remembered she had hoped, not so long ago, to enter a nobleman's family as his daughter-in-law; but her sister knew nothing of that.

She was punctual to the appointment. Lady Daryl was a fair comely woman not much over forty, and decidedly inclined to *embonpoint*. She received Nell with more cordiality than that young lady had expected.

"Sit down, Miss Stuart!" she said, kindly, "and let us understand each other. Do you object to go more than two hundred miles from London? and should you expect holidays more than once a year?"

Nell answered simply in the negative. Lady Daryl stared.

"Well, you are more sensible than most girls. I have seen twenty or thirty, and they all regarded Yorkshire as a wilderness."

"I am quite willing!" returned Nell. "I have lived all my life in London. I should be glad to get out of it."

"And you don't expect gaiety or society? My brother-in-law's house stands in a park. I don't suppose you've any idea how lonely it is?"

"You are not seeking a governess for yourself, then?"

"Oh, dear, no! I've no children, thank goodness. I keep my brother's house until he marries again, which he is sure to do soon. I've had five or six governesses, but they all complain of low spirits and loneliness; just as if anyone wanted a governess just for the pleasure of amusing her."

This speech was not so heartless as it sounded. The lady had an unpleasant knack of speaking her thoughts aloud—a very unpleasant habit for her listeners.

A little conversation followed; Lady Daryl appeared satisfied. She promised to write to Mrs. Ward, and forward her decision to Nell when she heard from the schoolmistress.

"You will go!" said Bee, when she had re-

ceived a full account of the interview. "I feel as if you would be sure to go."

And Bee was right. Just one week after, when January was not many days old, Miss Stuart met Lady Daryl by appointment at King's Cross, to travel in her company to the nearest station to Alandyke, the residence of Sir Jocelyn Leigh, whose little daughters were to enjoy her care.

She had been a little nervous as to her powers of sustaining a conversation for so many hours; but she need not have feared. Lady Daryl slept peacefully most of the time, only waking at rare intervals to partake of refreshments. And so the journey proved less formidable than poor Nell had expected.

She leaned back in her corner, and wondered if it was all a dream. Could it really be that she, who had never seen anything grander than the drawing-room of Acacia House, was to reside in a mansion?

She wondered what the children were like; her comfort depended a good deal on them since they were to be her sole companions; she hoped they were not spoilt, and that she could teach them to love her. That wish was still in her mind when the train stopped at Whar-ton, and Nell, collecting Lady Daryl's wraps and newspapers, prepared to assist her ladyship to alight, but was spared the trouble by a grave, earnest-looking man, who came forward, saying pleasantly,—

"Welcome home, Hortensia! I have been expecting you anxiously. The weather was so bad I thought you might be delayed."

"Oh, no, we came tolerably swiftly. Jocelyn, this is Miss Stuart, the governess I engaged for the children."

Sir Jocelyn honoured Nell with a low bow, but he looked at her so intently as to make her feel quite uncomfortable. Then he rallied himself by an effort, handed the ladies to the carriage, sprang in after them, and in another moment the splendid bays were bearing them rapidly homeward.

"How are the children?" Lady Daryl found time to ask. "You never mentioned them in your letters, Jocelyn."

"I believe they are well."

"And Adela's cold?" Then turning to Nell, "Adela is the heiress of Alandyke, Miss Stuart."

"She is nothing of the kind," said Sir Jocelyn, bluntly. "I won't have the child's head crammed with such nonsense, poor little maid!"

"But it's the truth," persisted Lady Daryl. "Unless you marry and have a son, Adela must one day be mistress of Alandyke."

Sir Jocelyn did not answer her; he retired into his shell and spoke no more before the carriage stopped before the grand entrance to Alandyke.

Nell determined that he must be a very ill-tempered man to be put out by such a trifle. How grave and stern he looked, and how little affection he evinced for his motherless children! He turned to her abruptly as she got out of the carriage,—

"Have you ever been to Yorkshire before, Miss Stuart?"

"Oh, no!"

"You don't look country born and bred."

"I have lived in London all my life."

"Ah!"

Again she was conscious of that close scrutiny, too earnest to be deemed rude, too intent to be quite pleasant. Nell decided he was short-sighted, and then she followed Lady Daryl upstairs to see the rooms prepared for her. Truly there was little cause for complaint—a bedroom, larger in itself than their three apartments at No. 6, Bilby-road, and a pleasant schoolroom beyond, fitted up with every regard to comfort.

"Governesses ought to stay," said Lady Daryl, a little petulantly. "This is one of the most cheerful rooms in the house. Miss Stuart, you will not see the children to-night. I will order tea for you here, and I shall expect to see you in the drawing room at nine. I hope you will be comfortable. If you want anything

don't hesitate to ring the bell; there is one servant kept on purpose to attend to you."

Left alone by the cheerful fire Nell's thoughts flew swiftly back to the home she had left. If only Bee could see her now, how pleased her little sister would be at the sight of all her grandeur. Before she went to bed she must write her a long letter, and tell her all about it. Here Nell sighed, as she reflected how long it would be before her arms clasped Bee again.

Enter a maid bearing tea, a pleasant, rosy-cheeked girl, who to Nell's relief, did not speak with a Yorkshire accent. The dread of not understanding the servant's language had troubled Miss Stuart not a little. She seemed inclined to talk, and the young governess did not check her as a more experienced person would have done.

"I hope you'll be comfortable, miss, I'm sure, and stay here, for the poor, dear children's sakes. They must be getting well nigh tired of seeing strange faces."

"Are they in bed? Shan't I see them to-night?"

"They are in bed this hour, miss. They always go at seven. Nurse says it's their papa's wish, for fear they should come down to desert if they sat up later. Sir Jocelyn can't abear children."

"But these are his own," expostulated Nell. "Sorely he must love them!"

"Sir Jocelyn loves nothing but himself, miss. Anyone in the parish will tell you the same thing; but he'll never prosper; there's a curse on him and his."

Nell shuddered, the girl spoke with such energy. Then, recovering breath, she went on,

"The master's the richest gentleman in the county, but he don't spend the quarter of his income, miss. He's just turned sour since my lady died."

"I daresay it troubled him," said Nell, sympathetically. "Was she ill long?"

"Nigh on five years, miss. Folks say Sir Jocelyn has never got over her death. He didn't ought to, for she died of a broken heart. She just pined away and died."

The maid departed, and Nell tried to collect her thoughts. She seemed to have come to an abode of mysteries. There might be no truth in the servant's gossip, but she felt sure Sir Jocelyn was a peculiar man, and instinctively she hoped his children were not on his model. She tried to do justice to the dainty food set before her, but it was the first solitary meal she had ever taken, and there was something sad in the experiment. When Mary appeared to remove the things she exclaimed at the little the young lady had eaten.

"It's just upon nine, miss. Shall I show you the way to the drawing-room?"

Miss Stuart thanked her; looked at her small white face in the glass, smoothed back a refractory hair, and prepared to follow.

It was quite a journey from her own apartments to the drawing-room, and she congratulated herself on having a guide, for she would never have found her own way through all those never-ending corridors and winding passages. At last they stood before a door which Mary just indicated with her finger and passed on, leaving Nell to enter alone.

For a moment she hesitated. After the tales she had heard of Sir Jocelyn she almost dreaded the sight of him in the flesh; then she turned the handle and went in. She need not have feared the baronet's presence; he was shut up in his smoking room, but Lady Dayl had another companion, the sight of whom made every pulse of Nell's heart throb. In an easy chair opposite the widow, very much at home, a careless smile on his handsome face, sat her lover of one little month ago—Guy Vernon.

(To be continued.)

"Four things come not back—the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, and the neglected opportunity."

LADY RAVENHILL'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

A YEAR has passed since the Ravenshills have gone abroad, and not very long ago there were great rejoicings at Blackmore on the birth of an heir to the name and estates. Tar barrels, bonfires, a tenants' dinner, and a tenants' ball; but Lord and Lady Ravenhill have only returned to England during the last few weeks, and it being June, and the height of the season, have established themselves in one of those magnificent mansions at the corner of Belgrave-square.

Lady Ravenhill has been to the drawing-room, and the same evening appeared in her opera box in all the glories of her diamonds (long since wrested from Mr. Issachar) and her court dress.

She looks lovely, and many eyes and opera-glasses are turned upon her as she and Mary sit in the front of the box, and in their turn criticize their surroundings, and laugh and whisper together.

"Is that Ravenhill's mysterious wife?" said one dandy to another in the stalls. "Uncommonly pretty she is, too! I don't see any one to beat her in looks in the house. He was always a fellow with an eye for a pretty woman and a good horse, but he'd better keep his optic on her, for she has somebody in the back of the box she keeps leaning back to every now and then with no end of *empressment*. A man, I can't see his face; and there's a chap behind the other woman, too! Who are they—can you see?"

"It's Ravenhill himself," said his friend, as he leant forward in answer to some appeal and looked towards the stage. "What a good-looking chap he is! Fancy him being so taken up with his own wife!" laughing. "Four or five years ago he was all for other fellows' sisters. What a change is here!"

"Well, you know," said the other, stroking his moustache, musingly, "when a man has a good-looking wife, and likes her, I can't see why he shouldn't speak to her, and ride with her, and go to places with her. 'Pon my honour I don't! I know it's not the fashion, that married people never drive together much now-a-days, but Ravenhill never bothered himself about the fashion at any time, and won't now. They have an A 1 house in town, and no end of a good cook; and everything is done in the best form. I shall go and leave a pasteboard."

"Ah! well; I don't mind if I do too!" assented the other; and a new act now coming on, the two gentlemen's attention was attracted in another quarter.

And now, before we lower the curtain, let us look at two pictures. The first represents a small back drawing-room in a very small house in Mayfair, a room with rose-coloured blinds, large paper Japanese fans, plants in stands, a number of little tables, a world of photographs in plush frames, chiefly of men, a sofa, and two or three quaint, stuffed chairs, two of which were drawn up to the fire, for Conny was a chilly person, and the evening or night rather, was damp.

These chairs are occupied by her and her friend—her *aine d'année*, Mrs. Fort—grass widow, about as fast a little woman as breathes the air of London—fair, petite, admirably dressed, with her little face deftly painted, her little feet resting on the fender, gossiping after dinner with Conny, and telling her scandalous stories, such as her soul loved.

Conny looks old, and shrunken, and *passé*, though she has endeavoured to repair the ravages of time with the aid of art. Her great, black eyes look fierce and hollow, and nothing will conceal the crow's feet in their neighbourhood.

"I saw your friends the Ravenshills walking in the Row this morning, Con, he looking as fit as you please, and she making quite a sensational promenade. I must say I admired her

dress, white, and made something quite too deliciously well. I wonder who is her dress-maker?"

"Fine feathers make fine birds," said Conny, spitefully. "I've seen her looking like an old rag woman. They came home about ten days ago, I believe, and have brought a baby with them."

"Well, what else were they to do? You wouldn't have them leave it behind?" said the other, cheerfully.

"I don't care if they drown it as far as I'm concerned!" said Mrs. Derwent, recklessly. "I loathe the young of the human species. I suppose I'll have to go and call," drawing down the corners of her mouth, "and do the civil."

"What! To the baby?" cried Mrs. Fort, with a laugh.

"No, but the baby's mamma; and I suppose it will be paraded for my benefit—this son and heir, this treasure!"

"One would think you were the next-of-kin to hear you, Conny. What has this Ravenhill woman done to get into your black books?" But, needless to remark, the answer to that question remained a secret locked up securely in Mrs. Derwent's heart. The only man she had really ever cared for was Lady Ravenhill's husband—was not that enough?

Another tableau represents an immense room in Belgrave-square—a drawing-room furnished with a rare combination of wealth and taste. Two figures near the fireplace look almost lost in its great proportions. They are the mistress of the house on a low chair in front of the fire, in a simple white dinner dress, with a painted hand-screen in her hand, and the master in evening dress standing by the mantelpiece sipping his coffee. These young people enjoy an evening at home, and many are the artful excuses they fabricate to get off a heavy dinner or a crowded ball, and the present is a case in point. By rights they ought to be making their bow at this moment to the Marchioness of Marbletop, instead of sitting at their own fireside.

"Now, Hugh, you've had enough coffee! Get the paper and read me the news of the day," said his wife, imperiously.

"I call this reading aloud to you a most awful plant!" he returned, laying down his cup with a smile. "You are an impostor, and have every bit as good use of your eyes as I have."

"Still, I must be careful," she replied, coolly; "and you know you like it, so get the *Times* and begin at once, or else tell me what you were doing with yourself this morning."

"Doing with myself! Well, for one thing, I was looking at a hack for you at Tattersall's. It's coming round for you to look at yourself to-morrow. I think myself she'll do, as handsome as a picture, and perfect manners."

"Manners!" she echoed, with a pout. "I don't want a well broken horse. I like one that takes some riding. I like showing off," looking at him mischievously, "especially in the Row."

"I daresay you do; but now you are a responsible person, the head of an establishment, the mother of a family. We won't mind any more showing off in or out of the Row."

"Oh! won't we! Wait till you see! I can do great things with a spur! And what is the price of this perfect beast?"

"I'm afraid to tell you?" he answered, with a laugh.

"So much?" opening her eyes very wide, and making a grimace.

"Yes, it's a stiff figure; but she is worth it to me," significantly.

"I wonder you don't get me a fat old gentleman's cob!" said Eleanor, laughing, "and a leading rein."

"That will all come in good time, when you're a fat old lady. Talking of old ladies, I saw Conny to-day," he added, abruptly.

"What!" cried Lady Ravenhill, jumping up to her feet.

"Yes, Conny, in Piccadilly! She looks as old as anything. You'd hardly know her, so withered, and pinched, and yellow."

"But no doubt she can make herself up at a push to look sixteen," said Nellie, with a nod.

"I don't think so! She's all gone to pieces—late hours and a wearing life are telling at last. It comes with a run when it does arrive—middle age. Conny is getting on!" reflectively, pulling his moustache. "She must be near forty."

"And what did she say?" inquired his wife, airing her ratin slippered foot on the fender, and regarding it complacently.

"She said she was delighted to see me."

"That, of course?" impressively.

"And awfully glad to hear about the son and heir!"

"I don't believe it, not if she went on her bended knees!"

"And she said she was coming to call on you."

"No!" incredulously.

"It's a fact, your ladyship."

"I won't receive her, so there's a fact for your lordship!"

"Nellie!"

"No, not a bit of it, Hugh; so never look at me like that. You dear, foolish old boy, did I never tell you of her last visit?"

"No, never; so say on."

"Well, my dear, just hearken to it now."

"Whatever of me is not eyes is all ears, so go on, and don't keep me on tenterhooks. I'm trembling with curiosity."

"She came to Blackford, and found me just the first day down, after a bad cold, cowering over the fire and in floods of tears."

"Tears—for what?"

"For you!" giving him a playful push; "but that's a detail we won't dwell on. And she came and made quite a long sitting, and gave me a good piece of her mind."

"A valuable present, truly."

"She said she hated me once, now she only pitied me. I was a wretched creature in every way—that she had always loved you. Did you ever hear of such audacity?" declaiming with the fan. "And that she was amply avenged since I had made you a miserable man, and we were parted for ever. Now what do you say to that?" gazing interrogatively at her companion, and nodding her head three times with great gravity.

"I never heard of anything like it, never," he returned, slowly, with his eyes fixed upon his wife. "And pray what did you do?" smiling. "Fly at her, hustle her out of the house, or what?"

"I just sat there, and let her storm away at me, and I was goose enough to cry. Oh, I just did cry!" nodding her head again.

"Well, my little Nell, we won't have any more of her visits, and Jervais shall say, 'Not at home.' See"—pinching her ear—"what it is to have a little dragon of a jealous wife, and how I'm bullied!"

"Jealous! Now Hugh, you know you are talking nonsense—the greatest possible nonsense and rubbish. It's much more likely I shall make you jealous, and have you tearing your hair out in handfuls, than I should be jealous of you. I warn you to be on your best behaviour. After all, let her come. I can afford to be generous; and we will ask her to this big dinner party that's coming over us early next month. She will make an admirable pendant to Freddy Firstlight—looking mischievously at her husband—"But she shan't see the baby, in case of the evil eye."

"Why, one would not think that an awful loss, you silly girl," said her husband. "He's not much to look at just yet—a button nose and a wisp of light hair."

"Hugh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. How dare you! You know he is beautiful—matchless; and his nose is not a button! It's exactly like yours."

"I should be sorry to think so," said his father, coolly surveying his own well-shaped feature in the chimney-glass. "He will never be as good-looking as I am"—looking slyly at his wife. "He's going to take after my father, as far as I can see."

"Now I'm not going to 'rise' to all this, as you imagine. You are just as ridiculous about the boy as I am—nay, worse. It's not so bad in a woman, but nursing a baby is unpardonable in a man. So there!"

"You are quite sure you are not jealous of Conny still?" said Hugh, suddenly turning the conversation.

"I! Good gracious, why should I be—that is, if you have any taste. I'm about fifteen years—well, twelve, [at any rate—] younger than she is. I'm very pretty," gazing at herself dispassionately in the glass. "I've been told that my figure is perfect—not by you, sir. I'm very agreeable, accomplished, and good-tempered, and—"

"The vainest young woman in London," interrupted her husband.

"No—no—no! quite the reverse. It's only to you, my second self, that I mention these little trifles, just to show you I am not ignorant of my worth. What do you think?"

"I think, my love, that, like Solomon's wise woman, your price is above rubies, and that I am just the luckiest fellow in England."

The grand dinner went off with great éclat at (no matter what number) Belgrave-square. Lady Ravenhill made a charming hostess; she had a fund of conversation, a score of witty sayings—and witty sayings come very aptly from the lips of a gay and pretty young woman. The elder men guests were not a little amazed to discover that under all that outward charm there was a thick layer of scientific learning (quite unusual learning) that had been or would be into Eleanor's reluctant head in her father's time, and that had actually remained "hero" ever since, and she found it rather useful than otherwise now!

Dinner over, the ladies adjourned upstairs, and were soon clustered about the precious suite of rooms looking at books, rare prints and pictures, while Lady Ravenhill herself undertook the task of entertaining the oldest and heaviest dowagers. Conny's eyes roved curiously over the spacious rooms, the pretty smiling hostess; and as she looked the gentlemen flocked in, Lord Ravenhill last. He made his way (for she watched him) to his wife's side, and said something to her with a smile—something for her ear alone.

"It was all first-rate, Nell; you are a pearl of hostesses."

This was what he had said, but it was the manner of it, and the look that accompanied it, that went like a dagger to Mrs. Derwent's angry heart.

"Why should that woman be so happy and so cast out in the cold, with no one to care for her?"

"The dinner was perfect," said a noted bon vivant, taking a seat beside her. "The sauce with the cutlets was something quite new! Did you taste the Beccadoodles?"

"I don't know," returned Mrs. Derwent, peevishly, shrugging her shoulders. "A grand dinner in one house seems to me just the same as another—I'm no epicure!" This was a side thrust at her companion, who felt riled, and was resolved to let her have a nasty one in return when he saw an opening.

"I never saw a better matched, better looking couple than our hosts! They seem to suit each other down to the ground—eh?" he remarked, after a short pause.

"They were not always like that," said his neighbour, triumphantly. "At one time they used to lead a regular cat and dog life; first she ran away from him, then he found her, and after a little while, left her, and then they made it up—"

"For life," put in her companion. "Better late than never; I've heard a good deal about it—one hears everything in London—there's very little we don't know, I can assure you, Mrs. Derwent," saying her significantly.

"There is one thing I would like to know!" she returned, impetuously. "Can you tell me how that girl, his cousin, whom he used to loathe, whom he shrank from, like the very plague, has managed to worm herself so entirely into his good graces, to establish the

most unbounded influence over him, to keep him tied to her apron strings—as that was always the greatest flirt in London, to make him worship the very ground she walks upon. How—how has she managed it?" she repeated, with passionate vehemence, looking into her companion's face, with questioning, fiery black eyes.

"Ah! my dear Mrs. Derwent! that I cannot tell you. It is beyond me—a kind of thing we don't hear too much of nowadays—perfect married happiness. But I can make a suggestion, if you will permit me. Why not ask Lady Ravenhill herself? No doubt she will tell you her secret!"

[THE END.]

O'CONNELL'S MONUMENT.—The corner-stone given by the Pope for the O'Connell monument at Calcuttyreen has been sent to Ireland. It is a genuine corner-stone of travertine, weighing several hundred weight, and was taken from the ancient house of St. Clement, Pope and martyr, discovered some years ago under two superposed churches by an Irish priest, where it had long sustained the principal arch of the building. On it have been engraved the words in which Leo XIII. blessed Canon Broanan's work. The Pope has also given Canon Broanan a white marble slab from the tomb of St. Flavian Domatilla, which will be placed in a conspicuous part of the projected monument, with the words uttered by the Pope at the private audience granted to the Irish delegation in December engraved on it.

A CHRYSANTHEMUM PARTY IN JAPAN.

A correspondent of the Boston Transcript writes thus of flowers in Tokio:—

"The Emperor and Empress request the pleasure of your company to see the chrysanthemums," said the invitation. The guests were received at the palace and passed before the imperial pair, being presented in turn and receiving a slight bow of recognition from each.

The mikado is of medium height, with black face and a quick, restless eye. He was dressed in a dark-coloured hauser uniform, with white trimmings. The Empress, who is quite petite, was dressed in court costume of scarlet brocade. The reception-hall opened to the galleries, and finger-boards indicating the paths to be followed.

Fine old trees, ponds, rustic bridges, old stone lanterns, beds of flowers, pretty tea-houses, wide-spreading dwarf trees three or four feet high, and long bamboo sheds filled with chrysanthemums, formed but few of the attractions of the scene.

Little tables were found at intervals, each with a pretty lacquer box of cigarettes on it, and a keeper leading a pair of Siberian bloodhounds was a feature. A moderately long walk through winding paths brought the guests to a large plateau, reached by a short and very steep ascent.

Reaching the top of the elevation, a large area of flower beds were found all of chrysanthemums in all shades—while in ornamental bamboo sheds were thousands of the loveliest and choicest specimens imaginable of this superb flower, which grows in great perfection in Japan. All colours, shapes and varieties are here in profusion, while several bushes had upwards of 800 flowers each, and one something over 400. Probably the display of chrysanthemums was the finest in the world.

Some time was spent in admiring the flowers, chatting and listening to the music when the imperial party led the way to a beautiful bamboo pavilion, fully 150 feet long, decorated with festoons of white and red silk, and the supporting columns being covered with masses of flowers. In this fairy-like structure tables were spread, loaded with delicacies both in and out of season.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BALL.

THERE was nothing in Reuben Fairchild's manner or appearance to frighten any one; on the contrary, he looked brighter and better than when I had seen him last. He was faultlessly dressed, and appeared every inch a gentleman. I feared him terribly, I could not tell why; there was something in his eyes that told of a power he could wield if he would; a triumphant expression that seemed to take possession of me somehow, and declare his power of making my will, or anyone else's for that matter, yield to his.

He was not demonstrative. He waited till Hugh Meredyth stood aside, and then he, too, held out his hand. He had greeted Lady St. Colomb and Hilda a moment before, but I was too glad at the sight of the man I loved to have any eyes for aught else.

"And I also," he said, taking up Hugh's dropped speech, "I hope Miss Ormsby will have a place for me on her card as well as more fortunate folk."

"My card is all places at present," I replied, trying with all my might to appear quite at my ease; but Harry snatched it away like the boy he was, and would have put his name down in all sorts of places if I had not interfered.

"Not for ever so many dances, please, Lord Henry," I said. "Just one if you will, at some unimportant period of the proceedings. Indeed you must not; you have to do the agreeable to everyone, remember."

"Especially to Miss Dolaworth," said Hilda, with a laugh, indicating a large young lady in red who had just entered the room. "She means to marry Harry some day," she added to me in a whisper not so low but that her brother heard it. "Don't you think they will make a handsome couple?"

"Does she," Harry said, with a grimace, "time will show. You are right, Miss Ormsby, I shall have duties to perform that are eminently disagreeable, but I mean to have you for a partner for this waltz and that polka;" and he set down his name at the two dances, and went his way to greet the guests, who were beginning to pour in now in one continuous stream.

Mr. Fairchild did not attempt to monopolise me, or indeed to speak to me again, till Hugh Meredyth had put down his name for more than one dance on my programme. Lady St. Colomb and Hilda were soon busy enough, and I was left pretty much alone.

"Try and enjoy yourself, my dear," her ladyship said, as she had to come out of her corner and be hostess; "you will not want partners, I see. Here is Mr. St. John asking to be introduced to you."

Mr. St. John was a young gentleman whom I had heard a good deal about, but never seen. His mother and sisters had visited Priory Park several times since my arrival there, but he had been away on the Continent. When I had promised him a dance Reuben Fairchild sat down beside me.

"I think you may promise me the next quadrille," he said, "I have a good deal to say to you."

"I hope not."

"Why?"

"Because I thought I had said all there was to say before you went away, Mr. Fairchild; the subject cannot be opened again between us."

"I think it can, in another way."

"In no way, if you please. If you cannot let the matter drop, and persist in your persecution of me, for it is little more, I shall be compelled to leave the ball-room and retire to my own apartments. It is unfair to take advantage of my position here to annoy me as you do."

"Heaven knows I don't want to annoy you," he said, with a strange tenderness in his voice.

"You don't care to dance this time? No. Well, we will go into the conservatory, and I will tell you what I have come back to say, Miss Dunsford."

Miss Dunsford! The place seemed to whirl round with me as I heard the name. Where had he been? How had he heard it? I had told it to no one at the Priory—had hardly ever mentioned it since my return from America, and the conclusion that I had arrived at that my search for my father was useless.

"My name is —" I began, but he stopped me with a curious smile on his face.

"Magdalen Dunsford," he said. "I know, and you are wearing the diamonds given by your lost father to your mother in the days when she believed he loved her. You see I know something. Will you hear what more I can tell you of yourself and your life before you came here?"

"There is nothing of my life to tell," I said. "If you know enough to understand what I want to find out, tell me how to get at the truth about my parents—my mother —"

"Left you a legacy of hatred and malice on her deathbed. I know that," he said, "and you have spent all your money and a great deal of time in an unsuccessful search for some proof of your father's existence. Is that not so?"

"It is," I replied, with a sigh.

"And what if I can put the clue into your hand?"

"You!"

"Just so; I hold it. I can put you in your proper place. I discovered the fact of your mother's existence long after she was supposed to be dead; and I might have spoken years ago, but events happened that sealed my lips. I was indebted—but that does not matter now—I have met you, and since that day—you remember it—that chilly day on the Rhine?"

Remember it! indeed I did. I recollected how even then the sight of his face had chilled me unutterably, and how nervous his stern manner and cold words had made me. If those were the symptoms of falling in love they were curious, to say the least of it.

"Ever since that day my love has grown, Magdalen," he said, gazing at me with those insupportable eyes of his till my own sank beneath their regard, "grown till it has mastered me. I never thought that the love of a woman could have so changed me. I am an altered man since I saw you; honour, gratitude, affection, all swallowed up in one absorbing passion."

He spoke the last few words almost to himself, and the odd strange light came back into his eyes, frightening me as he had done before.

"Say, Magdalen, will you be mine?" he asked again, in a softer manner, and trying to get hold of my hand, which I as resolutely kept away from him, "mine—my loved and honoured wife, I can give you back an honourable name and a place in the world. I can prove to you perhaps that your father was not the rascal that you have been led to think him; that your mother's flight was premature, and the result of semi-madness, and that —"

"Stop, Mr. Fairchild," I said, breaking in on his passionate speech. "I cannot listen to all this. Nothing in the world will induce me to marry you—no bait that you can hold out, however tempting, will make it possible for me to become your wife. I should be glad, more than I can tell, to find out what you say you can tell me, but the price is too high. Not even to know my father or to have his memory cleared from the aspersions I have heard cast upon it will I marry you. I would rather live on Magdalen Ormsby, unknown and uncared for to the end of my existence, than accept the highest honours at your hands. I would not wear a crown of your conferring if it were offered me to-morrow."

"No," he said, bitterly; "I might have known. Not while you can look into Hugh Meredyth's eyes and fancy that his loves

you. You will find your mistake when they have married him to his pretty cousin, and settled the family fortunes in that way. But I can wait as well for revenge as for happiness."

The dance was coming to an end in the ball-room now, and I could free myself from his annoying solicitations.

"Let me go, Mr. Fairchild," I said. "I have a partner for the next dance, and I beg that you will not renew the subject."

"I will make no promises."

"Then I will speak to the Earl."

"By all means. As I told you before, any word to him will bring worse consequences on his head than on mine. The Earl of St. Colomb had better have me for a friend than an enemy. Mr. Meredyth, I was just going to bring your partner to you. She is ready for her turn with you."

My hand was on Hugh Meredyth's arm the next moment, and Reuben Fairchild had disappeared through the curtains that veiled the other entrance to the conservatory, and left me trembling and agitated beyond the power of concealment.

"Would you like to sit out?" my new partner said, gently, perhaps feeling that I was trembling all over, and scarcely able to speak.

"No, thank you. I can dance."

"Has anything annoyed you? I don't know what there is about that fellow Fairchild, but I always feel as if I should like to give him a thrashing," Captain Meredyth said, apropos of nothing, as it seemed, and I laughed, and, as he said, reassured him that there was nothing serious the matter.

"Mr. Fairchild had something to tell me, and his manner of doing it was not quite as pleasant as it might have been," I said. "I am glad to get rid of him, that is all."

"And I am glad to have you, if only for the limit of a waltz. Who taught you to dance, Miss Ormsby? Waltzing with you is something to dream of—your step is perfect!"

"Oh, we danced as much as we liked at Wassenhanser," I replied, "and my dear Dorothy Soudes taught me. You would not think me perfect if you ever danced with her."

"Perhaps I shall have that felicity some day," he said, with a smile, that I did not in the least understand, "when—"

"When what, Mr. Meredyth?"

"When I have accomplished all that I mean to undertake," was his somewhat obscure answer. "Miss Ormsby, you are puzzling me very much."

"As how?"

I was forgetting Reuben Fairchild, and giving myself up to the enjoyment of the hour in a most reckless fashion. To-morrow would come soon enough with its disenchantment. For the present he was here, and I was whirling round in his arms to the strains of the sweetest waltz ever played or danced to.

"In every way," he answered. "I came here only half hoping to see you at the ball at all, but intending to talk to you, nevertheless. Then when I was told by a little bird that you were gone to grace the ball with your presence I fancied—"

"That I should be in some corner amongst the wallflowers, I suppose," I said, wondering at myself for chattering to him like this, but I was deliciously happy, and my tongue ran away with my discretion. "So I should have been, so I intended to be—a demure young person in a high dress, thankful for a dance with the veriest old guy in the room; but they would not have it so, the Countess and Lady Hilda. They dressed me, and bade me enjoy myself, and—"

"And these?" he asked, touching with a gentle finger the glittering gems on my neck.

"No, they are mine."

"Yours!"

"Yes, they were my mother's. I have never worn them before. It was only the dress that made me put them on to-night. Lady St. Colomb had no objection."

"No, why should she? You look like—well, like yourself, as you ought to look."

"I shall not know myself to-morrow when I lay them aside and put off this gleaming white silk, and take to my russet gown again. All this seems like a fairy dream."

"Cinderella rediviva," he said, laughing. "Nothing wanting but the prince."

"I am afraid he will be left out in my edition of the story. Seriously, Mr. Meredith, I do feel as if I were someone else. I have never been looked out like this in my life. The very smartest dress I had till now was the white one I wore at my school examination years ago."

"Ah, at our first meeting," he said, gravely, "But what if the prince does come, Cinderella, will you say him nay?"

Did his arm press me closer as he spoke, or was it my fancy? Did his eyes, always eloquent for me, speak yet more plainly than they had done before? The music stopped all of a sudden, at it seemed to me, for the minutes had flown like a second, and our dance was over.

"I have another dance," he said, as he led me to a seat close to Lady St. Colomb, where Mr. St. John was hovering to carry me away when his turn should come, and then as I sat down he bent over me and whispered,—

"The prince shall come, Magdalen, and bring his credentials with him. He has kept the shoe."

And I understood it all—my lost edelweiss, what Lady St. Colomb had seen, and I had not been mistaken.

"As I love, loved am I," says a pretty song that the Earl was very fond of, and I forgot Reuben Fairchild and all his unpleasant words in the glorious consciousness of Hugh Meredith's affection.

I am afraid Mr. St. John found me a most uninteresting and stupid partner, for I made all manner of mistakes in the Caledonians, which was the dance he had put his name down on my card for. He did not know much about it himself, so the blunders might have been his, and not mine, after all.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHAT CAME OF IT.

"I have kept the slipper." The words rang in my ears all the time I was Mr. St. John's partner, and came between me and all the compliments that that resplendent young gentleman was paying me.

He was astonished and agreeably surprised, he told me, to see me at the ball, and looking so handsome, he said, but turned it off with a cough into "so well after my accident." He hardly knew whether the outspoken compliment would be proper, although I was only a governess.

He was candid enough to tell me they had been somewhat puzzled how to address me hitherto, but that now everyone would see my proper position in the family, and regard me as a friend of Lady St. Colomb.

I might have been annoyed at such remarks from anyone else, but he was so free from anything like affectation, and so simple in his fashion of speech, that I laughed and took all he said as he meant it.

What did it signify to me now what anyone thought, what anyone said, after what Hugh Meredith had said to me? My wandering prince had become the enchanted lord of my future life, and after my duty dances with other people I should be whirling round the room again in his arms, and he would finish what the cessation of our waltz just now had stopped.

"My dear, you look radiant," Lady St. Colomb said to me, when I was once more back in the corner by her side. "I had no idea you would create such a sensation. Everybody is asking for an introduction to you."

"I ought to feel flattered," I said, "and I do, but I wonder anyone looks at me with Lady Hilda in the room. She is simply lovely."

"Yes, she looks well," her mother said, with a pleased smile, glancing at the fairy-like vision that was approaching her, leaning on Hugh's arm.

They had been dancing together, and every tongue had been loud in their praise, and not a few full of prophecy as to what their consinship and affectionate intimacy might end in.

I knew better, as did the family, though they would have liked to see such a union consummated.

"I don't know what has come over Hugh," Hilda said, when she was seated by her mother's side, "He is perfectly enchanting to-night."

"In what way?" Lady St. Colomb asked, smiling, and fastening a loop of Hilda's pearls that had danced themselves down.

"In every way—he is just amiability itself. He hasn't rebuked a single one of my saucy speeches, and I have made him plenty. He says he feels at peace with all the world, and me in particular. I suppose his tailor has fitted him to perfection, or his gloves are the right number, or the last cigar he smoked was just the proper strength, or something of that sort. Those are the things that make a man feel at peace, are they not, cousin Hugh?"

"There may be others, madcap!" her cousin said—the words were for her, but the look that accompanied them was for me. "Perhaps I may reveal the real reason to you soon, little one. I had no idea that my small cousin was coming out as a full-blown young lady in this fashion. You wrote me word this was to be a small homely party, just to wish Harry good-speed and—"

"And so it was!" Lady St. Colomb said, "but it has grown, I don't know how. I am not sorry; it will serve to let Hilda see a little of what she will have to expect next season. And we really owed it to our neighbours to give something of the sort. We have been such quiet, loving folks that we have been neglectful of the duties of hospitality sometimes."

"Never that," Hugh said. "You are too hospitable sometimes, my lady! So Fairchild is back again, I see."

"Yes," Hilda said, with a pout. "I did think we should have got over this evening without him."

"You don't like him, pussy?"

"No, I don't."

"And why?"

"I don't know! I think because he wants to marry everybody he sees,—everybody that's nice, that is."

"Dear me, does that mean your pretty little self?"

"No it doesn't; but it means Magdalen. He wanted to marry her."

"Did he! It was like his—well, his good taste," Hugh Meredith said, with a look at me that made me colour to the roots of my hair, and Lady St. Colomb exclaimed:

"My dear Hilda, do take care what you say."

"Well, 'tis true, ma!" she replied, "and I should not say it to any one but cousin Hugh, and Magdalen doesn't mind him. Do you, dear? He's only Hugh."

A new partner came and claimed her at this moment; and Lady St. Colomb, and Hugh as well, looked after her with proud affection.

"She looks pretty, doesn't she?" her ladyship said.

"She is just perfection," Hugh answered. And then as he heard the opening bars of the dance he came hastily to my side.

"I must go and claim my partner!" he said. "Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"What my little cousin has just declared."

"About Mr. Fairchild?"

"Yes! did he dare?"

"He did."

"Then tell him he is too late—unless you have already given him his answer."

"I have given it him most decidedly. He could not misunderstand me, but—"

"But he is not daunted."

"No!"

"Then tell him next time he is too late."

And with another look from his speaking eyes, that set my heart dancing and made my cheeks flush in spite of myself, he went away, and Harry stood before me.

"This is our dance!" he said.

"Is it?"

"Is it? Have you so many partners down that you are mixing them up? You are a success, and no mistake, and I am proud of you. I look upon you as a discovery of my own, you know, and I've told no end of—well, stories about you already."

"Please don't take my name in vain any more then," I said, standing up and putting my hand on his arm. "I know only too well what you can do in drawing the long bow."

"No, but really you look lovely! Come to this end, please. I want the pater to have a good look at us, or rather at you. He has never seen you in the war-paint, has he?"

"If you mean dressed out like this, no—I am sure he has not. I have not seen him all the evening."

"No, he seems dull, and has kept aloof. He says there's nothing the matter; but I can't help thinking that that confounded Fairchild—I beg your pardon, but I can't help it, I am so tired of him—has had something to do with his low spirits."

"When did Mr. Fairchild come back?" I asked. "He startled me not a little, I can assure you."

"He did all of us—springing up like a ghost in that fashion. He might have written to say he was on the road. He was closeted with the pater for half-an-hour or so, and ever since then the dear old boy hasn't been a bit like himself. He's in the big window yonder, looking on, he says—moping, I think—only I don't like to say anything to mamma or Hilda, they would take fright at once. Come along—cne, two, three, and we're off."

We were off in a breathless round that took my breath away for a moment. Harry danced, as he did everything else, energetically, and we were soon in the very swing and whirl of a fashionable polka; a dance he particularly affected. There was some go in it, he said, and indeed he made it appear that there was.

"There's the pater," Harry said, as we neared the particular window where his son had said he was to be found. "He don't look as if he was enjoying himself, does he?"

He did not indeed. There was a far-away look on his face as if he were miles away from Priory Park and all in it. He did not see us till we were close to him, and then he started at Harry's touch like a man roused from a dream.

"Here she is, sir!" he said. "I have brought her for you to look at. A modern edition of the white satin lady."

Lord St. Colomb looked at me, and some light word of approval that he was going to utter died upon his lips.

"Where—where—who?" he gasped, and, as if unable to utter another syllable of query, he touched the glittering necklace that I wore, and looked at me with such a piteous expression of inquiry and consternation that I felt quite frightened.

"Does your lordship mean to ask me where I got them from?" I said. "They are my own."

"Yes, yes; but who gave them to you?—whose were they before? Forgive me, child, I mean no harm nor any rudeness; but I have been troubled to-night, and little things upset me. They are like some that—they are like my lady's, for instance."

"Yes, they are!" I replied. "I suppose the pattern is not an uncommon one. They were my mother's, my lord."

"Your mother's?"

"Yes."

"When you have quite done with my partner, sir!" Harry broke in—he had been amusing himself with something that was going on in the room, and had not heeded his

father and me—"we should like another turn."

"All right, my boy, all right; don't let me interrupt you. Miss Ormsby, my dear, will you come to me in the library for a minute after your partner has done with you. I want to say a word to you before I sleep to-night."

"Surely, my lord, whenever you please!" Harry whirled me off again, declaring it was too bad of the governor to want to talk to anyone that night. But I had a misgiving there was something wrong, and told him I should beg off the next dance, and go at once as soon as this polka was over. Almost as I spoke something caught a locket Harry wore, and, but for my catching it, it would have been whirled away amongst the dancers.

"Thank you!" he said, as I restored it to him, "I should not like to lose that; it is a relic of bygone times."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, ever so long before I was in existence. I keep it because the device is so funny. It is a crest, but I always think it is like nothing on earth but two cats' heads snarling at one another. What's the matter? Come and sit down a minute."

The matter was that my head was in a whirl, or else I had seen that odd device before. It was on the case of the very diamonds I was wearing round my neck. As Harry said, it looked like two animals' heads, though of what kind it would have been difficult to say, it was so worn and rubbed with age. On this locket it was more distinct.

"That's the Dunsford crest," Harry said, when he had fastened the little trinket to his chain once more.

"The what?"

"The Dunsford crest—our crest before we dropped into the St. Colomb glories."

"Yours?"

It was all I could say in my amazement, and Harry looked at me as if he thought I were giving a little out of my mind.

"Yes," he said, "Didn't you know—"

"Know what?"

"That we were not always St. Colomb or Meredyths. My father took the name with the title, you know."

"No, I don't know. Tell me, please," I said, in a strangely calm voice, that seemed to myself as if it came from a distance, and feeling that every atom of colour had gone out of my face. "I seem to hear something fresh about you and yours every day."

"This is stale enough, any way. My father was plain Edgar Dunsford before he was Earl of St. Colomb, and—"

I didn't hear any more. The name "Edgar Dunsford" seemed to roar itself out in my ears like thunder, and the ballroom to fill with mist, in which the dancers grew shadowy and dim. Edgar Dunsford! The man whom my mother had cursed on her deathbed, and bidden me seek, that I might work her vengeance on him! Could there be two? Or was the Earl, who had been so kind to me, the wicked father she had bid me denounce when I should find him? "Edgar Dunsford!" A thousand voices seemed to shut it in my ears; and, with a gasping cry, I lost all sense of what was going on around me, and sank at Harry's feet unconscious of everything, even his kindly presence.

(To be continued.)

TRUE EDUCATION.—It has come to pass a thousand times in each generation that men have lived in the midst of books without either knowledge or wisdom. No mind has ever been truly educated unless it has marked well the actions and impulses and the rewards and punishments of its fellow-men, as they have been happy or miserable, have risen or fallen by its side. The days all speak; the years, fifty, sixty, or seventy, teach wisdom. Other things being equal, there is an education in days and years which no classical course can ever give.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

JUDITH'S EXPLOSION.

It is time to return to Coombe Lodge, where the invitation to Lord Wentworth's had just been received, and raised a storm in the breast of one, a flutter of excitement in the heart of another.

Judith, calm but defiant, looked daggers at her sister's pretty face, which was absolutely radiant with joy. Long ago she had been passed over for her cousin, who was now filling the place at the Chestnuts which she considered to be her own by right, and a second time she was put aside for Rose—a girl whom Lord Wentworth had scarcely ever seen.

Her only hope was that her father would refuse to let Rose go. He had always forbidden them to hold any communication with their cousin, and after that surely it must seem too ridiculous to let her stay under the same roof.

General Forrester took the letter upstairs to his wife, and the two girls were left alone at the breakfast-table. As soon as the door closed behind his revered back, Rose's delight broke bounds.

"Oh, Judith!" she exclaimed, "won't it be fun! I never was so delighted at anything in my life. Don't you envy me?"

"Certainly not!" with acid decision. "It remains to be seen whether you are going."

"I don't think papa meant to say 'no,'" with happy confidence.

"I am sure he couldn't say 'yes,'" What are you thinking of? If he wouldn't let Sibel remain here because she was a disgrace to us, do you think he would let us go to the house where she is living? It would be quite absurd!"

"She wasn't a disgrace to us!" said Rose, hotly; "and you've no right to say such nasty things of a girl who never did you any harm in your life."

"No harm!" and Judith's eyes flashed as the resentment which had been smouldering for years leapt into flame. "Do you call it no harm to set Dudley Wentworth against me—to wheedle herself into the place which I ought to have—to be the petted daughter of the house instead of me? Good heavens! when I think how that girl has ruined my life I feel as if I should never be satisfied till she was dead! Just because she looks like a pretty painted doll, and doesn't mind who she flirts with, she is to be put before me!" drawing herself up with the air of an empress. "I only wish I could give her the small-pox. Yes, you needn't look shocked; she should have it in the worst form, till every bit of her skin was crumpled out of shape, and the eyes she makes such use of sunk in their scorched lids!"

"Judith, are you mad?" cried her sister, breathlessly.

"No, not mad; only much wider awake than any of you," she said, sullenly. "Go to the Chestnuts, and what will you find when you get there? That she has twisted Hugh round her finger, like everyone else; and you'll have the pleasure of standing out in the cold. Mark my words. You are as blind as a bat, but you will see it plainly enough—when too late!"

Having said her say, she went out of the room and slammed the door, as if to give a fresh emphasis to her unpleasant remarks.

But no emphasis was needed. This unexpected outburst of rage and jealousy from the stately Judith had left Rose perfectly agast.

Utterly startled out of her equanimity, she stood for some time as if rooted to the carpet, her eyes wide open in a sorrowful stare, and her lips apart; but when the man-servant came in to clear away the breakfast she flew into the garden, conscious that her face would betray her emotion, and excite the gossip of the servants' hall.

Having reached a retired nook at the back of the shrubbery, where she and Phil had

played their favourite games as children, she threw herself down on the grass and tried to collect her scattered wits.

"Judith must be mad!" An absolute shudder ran through her body as she recalled her sister's vindictive wish. "She couldn't have meant it—it was like the wild raving of a pagan squaw, and not in the least like a Forrester brought up in the fear of Heaven, and due regard to the precepts of religion. Was Sibel to be hated simply because she was so pretty and charming that no one could resist her? Dudley was away, so that if he loved her to distraction no one would be a bit the wiser; and if Hugh were devoted to her"—here she could not help a sigh—"well, it was very natural." She was the dearest, most lovable creature on earth; and as to the stories against her there was not a bit of truth in them—of that she was quite sure.

She leant her head upon her hand and fell into deep thought, making a pretty picture as she sat at the foot of an ivied stump, her golden hair like a glory round an angel's face. Rose Forrester had grown into a pretty girl, with a sweet, pale face, and large blue eyes. Their usual expression was strangely sad, as if they had caught the infection from Hugh's, but every now and then they would light up with sudden fear, an exquisite tint would come into her cheeks, and marble would wake into life. She looked so delicate, as if a puff of wind would blow her away, and an angry word might kill. She was the favourite of the household—her mother's especial pet, and her father's sunbeam.

General Forrester was proud of his eldest daughter, but his sternness never relaxed entirely, unless his eye chanced to fall on his "little white Rose."

His voice calling her name roused her from her dreams, and scrambling to her feet she hurried through the lights and shadows of the shrubbery, across the blazing lawn into the cool darkness of the house.

Her father beckoned her into the library, and she went in, her heart beating fast with hope and fear. One timid glance she raised to his face, which was portentously grave, and then she sat down involuntarily on the nearest chair, for her knees showed every intention of giving way. Was she to go, or to be kept at home as Judith wanted, and shut out for ever from all the delights she had been picturing?

The General cleared his throat, as was his invariable habit when anyone was waiting in a fever of impatience to hear what he was going to say; and having done that, he opened his lips, whilst his little daughter absolutely shook with anxiety.

"Your mother agrees with me that it would be a pity"—Rose absolutely gasped as he paused—"a pity to refuse you a glimpse into better society than we can find down here, so that if you feel there would be no awkwardness—ahem—in meeting your cousin, I will write to Lord Wentworth and say—"

"Oh, papa, how delightful!" and bounding from her chair she clasped her arms round his neck and kissed his worn cheek again and again.

"But I haven't finished," with an indulgent smile, such as no one but Rose ever brought to his face. "I may write and decline!"

"No—no, that wouldn't be sense with what went before."

"So you are pleased to go away from us?" with an attempt at reproach.

"But I shall have such a lot to tell you when I come back. I wonder if Phil can get leave. Won't it be jolly if he does?"

"I shall be glad because there will be somebody to take care of you. Remember, Rose," resuming his pompous manner, "I will have no wild pranks—no flirting nonsense, or disreputable escapades in the moonlight. You will be under Lord Wentworth's roof, and he, I am happy to say, would never tolerate anything of the kind."

"No more would I," drawing up her white throat with offended dignity. "If you can't trust me, perhaps I had better not go."

"But I can. Only I wish you to guard against an evil influence," his lips going into a hard, straight line as he thought of his niece.

"Hugh will be the only man there, except Phil, and it is too late to guard against him; we are such very old friends."

"It was not Hugh I meant. You know that well enough. Now run away to your mother. I believe she fancies a new dress will be necessary, but I hope you will be able to do without it. That woman's last bill stamped me, I can tell you."

Rose hurried off nothing loth, and had an animated discussion over the exigencies of her toilette in the privacy of her mother's room.

She was so intensely happy that every now and then she burst into song, and Mrs. Forrester watched her with a tender smile, thankful that her husband had given the required permission, so that she had not to look on a tear-stained face instead.

It was decided that nothing but a new dress would do for the Connors's dance, and a letter was written at once to the dressmaker, in spite of that last long bill. It was to be of the palest blue tulle, because blue would set off the pretty blonde hair, and the close-fitting bodice was to be of satin, embroidered in the same coloured jet. Knowing that in such a dress she could scarcely fail to look her best, the girl's spirits rose to an alarming pitch; but one glance at Judith's set face brought them down with a run, and left a feeling of guilt in their place. Was it right for her to rejoice over anything that, for some occult reason, caused her sister such extraordinary pain? But then Judith had no right to be angry, for the invitation was given to celebrate Hugh's coming of age, and it would have been absurd for her to go to the Chestnuts as Macdonald's special friend. Lord Wentworth of course knew that the two younger ones were nearer his age, and therefore more likely to get on with him the best. When Dudley came home it would be natural for Judith to be invited, and Rose would stay behind quite contented, without wishing to give her an attack of small-pox out of revenge!

Phil wrote to say that he had been able to get leave, and would meet Rose on the afternoon of the fifteenth at Victoria.

Friedrich conducted her young mistress up to town, and delivered her safely into her brother's hands, wishing at the bottom of her heart that she might have accompanied her to the Chestnuts, in order that she might bring some pet scrap of gossip home about that "artful young hussy." No doubt she was up to her mischief just the same as ever, and if she could have caught her tripping it would have been joyful news for Miss Judith.

Phil had grown into a gentlemanly-looking young man, rather lanky in figure, and narrow across the chest. He was neither handsome nor plain, but had a weak, fair face, which would have been much better-looking if it could have acquired an expression of manly resolution. As the two travelled down to Thorndale he was wondering what Sibel would think of him, and how she would greet him.

Had she forgotten that unlucky valentine, or would she owe him a grudge for it till the last day of her life? He pulled his tiny moustaches nervously as they came near the station, and subsided into profound silence. For two years he had treasured her image as the perfection of girlish beauty; but he was a boy then—and boys were always in love with the first girl they came across. Now he had grown critical, and was not disposed to fall down and worship unless the idol were really something superlative; but if he failed to worship, on the other hand he hated to be snubbed, and there seemed to be some chance of that most unpleasant alternative.

Hang it all! He was a man now, and could hold his own with everyone except the governor at home.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HUGH'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

Two figures were standing on the platform—a young lady dressed quietly, but tastefully, in the last fashion, with a large parasol, from under which peeped the most bewitching face in the world, and a young man, tall and distinguished looking, in spite of the ordinary suit of diction in which he was arrayed. Lieutenant Philip Forrester, of the Royal Derbyshire Foot, forgot all about his qualms in honest admiration of his cousin's beauty. He opened the door and jumped out, as Hugh was in the act of raising his hat to Rose, and forgot to help his sister out in his eagerness to shake hands with Sibel.

"How 'dye do. Ages since we met!" "Oh! Phil. I shouldn't have known you," as she stepped back in order to have a good look at him. "To think of you as a real officer! I shall have to begin to treat you with respect. But where's Rose? You dear little thing! I'm so delighted to see you."

In spite of porters and sundry nondescripts who had just arrived, the warmest of hugs ensued, and the tears were in two pairs of eyes when they walked side by side to the carriage. "The brougham for you and me, the cart for the boys. Get in, I shan't feel as if you were really come till I've landed you at the Chestnuts."

"Oh, Sibel! I'm so glad," and a little hand stole into hers, as they drove rapidly through the leafy lanes towards their destination.

They had so much to tell each other that it seemed as if a whole week would scarcely be long enough to bring them to the end of their conversation; but a pause was enforced by their arrival at the Chestnuts, and the necessity of responding in some sort of fashion to Lord Wentworth's cordial welcome.

After five o'clock the four young people strolled about the garden, Phil on in front with Sibel, Hugh lazily loitering behind with Rose, whilst he pondered over a certain point which vexed him.

"And you like your life now, Phil?" asked Sibel, with cousinly interest, as she stole a glance sideways into his face, and wondered why his moustaches would not grow like Macdonald's.

"Yes, to be sure, but the service, you know, isn't what it used to be."

"No? I heard the other day that in so many ways it was much improved."

"Is it thought? I should like to know how. Formerly you might be pretty sure of having gentlemen for your comrades; now any one can get in, if he happens to have enough brains."

"Is that the case in your regiment? I mean are there many cad?"

"Not in ours. Jove, we should soon turn them out."

"Then what were you grumbling at?"

"I grumbling! Nothing was further from my thoughts!"

"Oh! I thought you were," mockingly.

"No, I was only saying what everyone else says, so it must be true."

"I don't know. Get a big man to tell a falsehood, and crowds are sure to believe it."

"Ah! but humbug hasn't a chance in these days. It's run down like a fox."

"Then what is to become of you?" looking up at him with laughing eyes. "I am afraid your trade must have failed."

He laughed. "It did when you dissolved the partnership."

"I never was in it!" with just indignation, for by nature she was as open as the day.

"Yes you were; you were the life and soul of the concern. It was for you I was always humbugging and cheating the others. I never should have thought of it if it hadn't been for you."

"Phil, I am ashamed of you!" "Pray be as angry as you like. I haven't forgotten how we used to kiss and make friends," with imperturbable serenity.

"We shan't do it now," growing very red.

"Why not? Is there any reason against it?"

"Plenty!" turning her back and pulling a caterpillar off a rose.

"Not so many as there are in favour—brand new ones, worthy of the most serious consideration."

"Pray let us be serious," she said, demurely.

"I am, as grave as the governor. Couldn't say more. First, you are more charming than ever; secondly, I am more determined; thirdly, I should enjoy it so much more than when I was a cub."

"What would you enjoy?" said Hugh's voice from the back ground.

"A cousinly privilege, which has nothing to do with you!" said Phil, with a laugh. "You attend to your own business, and we'll mind ours!"

"Perhaps yours is mine," muttered Hugh, with a shade on his face.

"Shan't we take them into the kitchen-garden and give them some strawberries?" said Sibel, hastily.

"By all means!"

The girls stood under the shade of an apple tree whilst "the boys" picked. There was plenty of fruit, and after a little while they all adjourned to a small arbour in the corner of the garden, to eat it at their leisure. Hugh picked out one strawberry as big as an egg, and handed it to Sibel. She admired it much, and passed it on to Rose, who ate it, and said it was very delicious, but Hugh turned away his head, and scarcely listened to her praises.

Shortly afterwards Sibel took Rose to her room, in order to prepare for dinner, and then ran down to the conservatory to find a flower for her hair. She had not been there long when Hugh came in, with his hands in his pockets and an air of great preoccupation.

"Awful bore having to go off to-morrow! Shouldn't mind it if some of you were coming too."

"I thought Phil was going?"

"So he is!" in a way that showed his presence was not all that could be desired.

"You see, it would be so firing for Rose," doubtfully, as she got a spray of maidenhair.

"For Rose, yes, but I thought—I hoped you wouldn't mind."

"But I couldn't go!" in intense surprise. "Fancy my walking off into another county with two young men."

"Better than with one. Seriously, do you think it would matter? I chaperoned you once before to Woolwich."

"Yes, but here I should have to make a public spectacle of myself before a crowd of your tenants. Why, they would naturally jump to the conclusion that I was the future Mrs. Macdonald. And that would never do!" with a laughing shake of her head.

He looked as grave as a judge.

"Why not?"

"Don't be ridiculous!"—then anxious to change the subject—"I am in great tribulation. Do you know to-morrow will come, and I don't believe I shall have a present to give you! Don't imagine that I forgot it, but the wretched people haven't sent it."

"All the better, I can choose my own."

"No you can't, you impertinent boy, for it was ordered long ago, and I can't afford two."

"But you wouldn't leave me without one?"

"What am I to do if I have nothing to give?" lifting her lashes in great perplexity.

"Give me something small that won't cost anything. Let me choose it myself."

"But I've nothing," lost in deep thought. "A volume of the Idylls, but it's grown quite shabby. A travelling inkstand—but you never write—a pen-case, but the stone at the end of it has fallen out."

"Bring these treasures here to-morrow morning at nine o'clock."

"But I tell you none of them will do."

"Never mind, will you give me whatever I choose?"

"Of course I will, but I wanted it to be splendid."

He smiled.

"I shall value it coming from you; but mind"—very earnestly—"come quite alone. And don't let Phil come after you. Now, do you know you will be frightfully late for dinner?" throwing open the door into the drawing-room, to expedite her escape, with a mischievous smile.

"No, whose fault is that?" and she ran away with the speed of a frightened rabbit.

The next morning, directly she was awake, the thought of Hugh's present was uppermost in her mind. She had intended to give him something especially unique, which he might value in after years as a gift from his old friend; and now it was a real mortification to find that she had nothing to offer him that was worthy of the occasion. Just as the clock struck nine she appeared at the door of the conservatory, with a variety of articles in her hands. Hugh was there before her, and gave her hand the warmest of shakes, in answer to her good wishes. Then the treasures were spread out on the seat, and they both stood silently regarding them.

"Take them up and look at them. How can you choose till you know what they are like?"

"I have chosen," he said, quietly, as he put his arm round her waist, and drew her gently to him. "You can't refuse it me. You said I might have what I liked."

"But, Hugh!" her face covered with blushes, as she drew it shyly away.

"Sibel, think, is it too much to ask?" his dark eyes looking wistfully into hers. "We have been like brother and sister for all these years. You would give it to Phil, just because he is your cousin—can you refuse it to me? Tell me, which do you like best?"

"You, a thousand times!"

Then very gently, but with inward passionate eagerness, he touched her lips with his, and for one long minute he held her to his heart, her bright head resting on his shoulder. Oh! to hold her so for ever, and protect her against all the sins and the sorrows of the world, to have the right to watch over her, and to keep everyone else away! He was lost in a dream which seemed almost too sweet for earth, when Phil's voice was heard in the hall, fretfully inquiring "where they all had got to!"

Sibel started.

"I must go."

"You have made this day the happiest of my life," his eyes shining with joy.

A pang shot through her heart, as she saw his radiant face transfigured with love and delight.

"What have I done?" she faltered.

"Nothing wrong, dearest, so don't repent; one happy day in a man's life is not too much for him," speaking in a low, hurried voice, still unsteady from excess of feeling.

Her fears increased, but she tried to comfort herself with a remembrance of his youth.

"Remember," she said, suddenly, "you are only a boy!"

"Not to-day," with a smile. "I am a man, something more than a plaything, and capable of being anything that you want."

"I want nothing but a brother," gathering up her parcels in some confusion.

"Then a brother I'll be for the present. Shall I carry those for you?"

"For the present? Why do you say only for the present?" as she let the book fall, and he stooped to pick it up.

As he raised his head their eyes met; and there was such a look in his that her own sank, and her lashes seemed glued to her cheeks.

"Hugh! Hugh! what on earth are you after?" cried Phil, wrathfully, as he came striding through the drawing-room, having at last discovered his whereabouts. "Here have Rose and I been waiting for you for the last half-hour, and the cart will be round in five minutes."

"Plenty of time," said Hugh, carelessly.

"You must allow a fellow one moment to receive his birthday presents."

"Good morning; how blooming you look!"

to Sibel, as he shook hands and attempted to use his cousin's privilege; but Hugh's eye was upon him, and Sibel threw back her head so decidedly that he laughed, and wanted the courage to go on.

In the dining-room Rose was waiting with her present in her hand. She came forward, her pretty face suffused with blushes.

"It's only a little trifle, Hugh, from Phil and me, and I wish you many happy returns of the day."

"How awfully kind of you. I shall value it immensely!" and he shook hands heartily with them both.

Then he undid the silver paper, and discovered a cigar-case of morocco leather, embroidered in forget-me-nots.

"Did you work it forme?" looking at Rose.

"Now, really, that was too good of you. I shall be smoking from morning till night, and every time I light a cigar I shall think of you and Phil."

"Well, Sibel, what did you give him?" asked Phil, as he resumed his seat at the breakfast-table.

She bent her head over the silver coffee-pot, whilst Hugh called out, as he stretched across the table for some dried mushrooms,—

"Something too exquisite."

"Have you got it here? Show it us."

"Of course I've got it. Help yourself to some kidneys. Where's the pepper? Here's the salt. Ours went to my uncle, and then I'm off."

"He has eaten nothing," said Rose, regretfully, as he rushed out of the room.

"The little boy's excited," said Phil, patronisingly; "but, never mind, I've eaten enough for two."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HIS DREAM WAS OVER!

"You didn't expect to see me?" said Lord Windsor, as he came forward to greet the party from the Chestnuts, his collar as high as ever, and his diamond solitaire shining like a star.

He shook hands with Lord Wentworth, nodded to Hugh, bowed low as his mother introduced him to the Forresters, but his speech was addressed to Sibel, and his thoughts were with her all the while.

"Jove, I thought I was never going to see you again. Only came back last night, and what do you think brought me?"

"Possibly the train," with a slight smile, as she looked round at the blue velvet hangings and the shining mirrors, and remembered her own feelings at her first visit to the Court rather more than two years ago.

"Yes, but what made me get into the train?"

"The wish not to be left on the platform," demurely looking down at the roses which Hugh had given her.

"But I needn't have come to the platform."

"No, I suppose not. Why did you?"

"You might have asked that before."

"You might have told me without waiting to be asked."

"I wanted you to guess."

"But how could I, knowing nothing of your movements or your motives?"

"You didn't know where I was, but you did know why I wasn't here. My mother says I've deserted her shamefully, so I told her—"

"Windsor, you really must go and speak to the Duchess," and Lady Windsor smiled at Sibel, as if to show that she was glad to see her son talking to her, although she was obliged to call him away. "Is that pretty little girl just like a snowdrop, your cousin?"

"Yes, it is her first ball, and I am so anxious for her to enjoy it."

"I think she will if Mr. Macdonald—Hugh, I must call him Hugh—is as anxious as yourself. What a pretty pair they make!" look-

ing across the room to where Rose was sitting by Lord Wentworth's side, whilst Macdonald was leaning over the back of the sofa, "he with his dark Spanish face, and she a dear little blonde. I believe I am developing into a match-maker, but I can't help it when Hugh is concerned. This is his party to-night. Who shall he open it with? Shall it be Lady Constance? I tell Windsor he is nobody."

"And I am so glad," said her son, at her elbow. "Macdonald shall dance with all the heavy swells, and I with the ones I like best. Will you come?" offering his arm to Sibel, as if that were the natural consequence of his last speech.

She laughed and shook her head, and at the same time Hugh came hastily across the room fearing that she had forgotten her promise.

"I hope you have not forgotten," he said, with a low bow. "This is mine."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lord Windsor, angrily. "I have come all the way from London to dance it."

"That's not much," said Hugh, with a smile. "I've come of age on purpose for it."

"You! What is it to you?"

"More than anything else," and he led his prize off in triumph.

"Confound the boy! What the deuce does he mean by it? There can't be anything in it. Well, at any rate, I'll show her that I'm not breathing my heart," and the next moment he astonished the modest Rose by asking if he might have the honour.

Lord Wentworth she had always regarded with the utmost awe; but now she was actually dancing with an earl, and did not find him in the least degree awe-striking. He made her laugh, with his odd way of talking, and she found herself chatting with him as merrily as if her partner had been Hugh.

"Cousin still going to marry Lushington?" he asked, abruptly, as they stopped to take breath.

"Yes; I think so," with a slight sigh, for she had never considered him worthy of her.

"Not certain, eh?"

"She is engaged, and has been for ever so long."

"What made her do it?" lowering his voice confidentially, and longing to stoop, but the edge of his collar nearly cut off his ear.

Rose blushed crimson, as she remembered every disagreeable reason that had driven her cousin to such a desperate measure. Could she tell them of this extraordinary young man, and if not, what was she to say?

"He is very handsome," she said, hesitatingly.

"Old proverb, you know, 'Handsome is as handsome does.' If you looked at him in that light he might be downright plain."

"Yes?" breathlessly. "Is he very wicked?"

A smile flitted across the earl's face.

"Don't do to take a man's character away behind his back? Have another turn?"

Poor little Rose glided round the room in a perturbed state of mind, although she looked as sweet and serene as a primrose before it is gathered. The careless words uttered by Lord Windsor had conjured up a vision of wickedness before her mind's eye, and she felt as if she were the depository of a terrible secret which she must divulge to somebody, or else let it be a nightmare to her for the rest of her life.

Should she tell it to Hugh? Oh! why did he dance with Sibel as if he had not a thought beyond? She was somebody else's property, though no one would guess it to see those two together—the air of proud appropriation in the one, the evident, fond affection in the other.

She had treasured up the book of verses which he had given her on her tenth birthday; but she would never remember that he had written H.M. in a boyish scrawl under the sonnet to a rose, or how how often she had read it, till the quaint, old words were engraved on her heart!

The waltz ended, and she was claimed by one partner after another, but Hugh seemed



[HUGH'S BIRTHDAY GIFT.]

to be always in close attendance on Sibel, and to have clean forgotten all about his little old, old friend.

"I don't believe you have danced with Rose yet!" she said, in surprise, towards the middle of the evening.

"Not yet, there is no hurry," as his arm stole round her waist for another turn.

"Oh, no hurry! and when the end of the evening comes and she hasn't a dance to give, you will be so savage."

"You said I should be in love with her half-an-hour after she came to the house. Do you see much sign of it?"

"Oh, that is all perversity! You always have been her special friend, and of course you always will."

"Not always, only when I was a boy. How hot the room is! Shall we go into the garden?"

Without waiting for an answer, although he was generally so anxious to ascertain her wishes before expressing his own, he led her through the open window across the terrace, down a few steps on to the seclusion of a lower path, where there were no prying eyes to see, no inquisitive ears to listen. There was a low seat under an arch of roses at the end, and there he halted, took out his pocket-handkerchief to wipe away the dew, and dropped down beside her, as soon as she had thanked him and taken her seat.

It was a glorious night, with not the slightest breeze to move the branches, and the stars looked down from Heaven in the breathless hush, whilst the insect world was sleeping, and all nature that did not beat with a human pulse seemed glad to rest.

Hugh's heart was throbbing with passionate hope, but he was half afraid of speaking the words which rushed to his lips. Long ago he had thought that Dudley Wentworth was his rival, but the years had passed without a sign, and he had taught himself to believe that he had been mistaken from the first.

As to Lushington, a hint dropped by Phil had opened his eyes, and his suspicions were not far from the truth. She had been drawn into the engagement, thanks to the awkward circumstances in which she had found herself placed, and her heart had never been given with her promised hand. If her heart were still free, he swore that he would win it, and Major Lushington, who had sneaked off to Canada, like a dog with his tail behind his legs, might find some North American belle for his wife. He knew that he ought to wait, but his heart was on fire, and his youth was strong within him.

He leant his arm on the back of the seat, and looked down at her with longing eyes; stooping so low that his breath fanned the soft, brown curls, which added such a pretty grace to her forehead. They were alone, with the scent of the flowers rising like a breath of incense all round them, and the dusky wings of night to shadow.

"Some day I shall have to leave the Chestnuts, and go to a home of my own. It is so lonely. I thought of it to-day when all the speeches were done, and the people had gone. There was not a soul in the house, except a handful of servants, and they stared at me as if I were a stranger. I shall never go there—never have the courage to face them again, unless—unless— Could you promise to come with me when I go?" in the softest, tenderest whisper.

"If Lord Wentworth would bring me."

"Lord Wentworth! Do you think I could ever leave him as long as he was alive? I was talking of afterwards"—his voice sinking—"afterwards, when you and I are left. You'll be all the world to me, and I should care for nothing else."

"Oh, Hugh!" the tears starting to her eyes, for it was such pain to grieve him, "how can you ask? You forget, I shan't be there."

"If you are thinking of Lushington, that's nothing. I swear you shall never marry him!"

But, is there any other reason? I had waited and watched, till I almost thought it was very presumptuous, but you were so kind."

There was no answer, but the brown head sank lower, and the quivering face was covered with her hands.

A terrible fear crept through his heart, and his face turned ashy pale.

"Sibel, for Heaven's sake, tell me!" Again, no answer, but the white shoulders shook with a convulsive sob. "What are you crying for? Not for me, surely?" in great dismay, dropping down on his knees before her, and gently drawing away her hands, and holding them fast. "Don't, my darling!" as a large tear fell on his hand. "I can bear it—a man can bear anything," gulping down the lump which rose in his own throat. "I ought to have known I wasn't half worthy of you!"

"Oh! if you could only have been my brother!"

"I will be; and, from this day forth, I devote myself to you!" looking up into her pitiful face, like a young knight of old, taking his vows. "When you want me I shall be there, and when you don't want me—" his voice broke, but he went on bravely to the end. "You—you needn't trouble about me at all." Then his head sank, and his fevered lips rested on her hands. His dream was over.

(To be continued.)

Let a man have fervent love for what is pure and just and honourable, let him have a cordial abhorrence of what is sensual, mean, tricky, and ungenerous, and he will not go far wrong.

WATERPROOF IN BOOTS AND SHOES.—A practical writer states that books and shoes may be rendered waterproof by soaking them for some hours in thick soap water. The compound forms a fatty acid within the leather and makes it impervious to water.



["MEGGI," HE SAID, "I AM IN TROUBLE, AND FOR A TIME IT IS IMPERATIVE I SHOULD NOT BE FOUND HERE!"]

NOVELLETTE.]

JACK'S LEGACY.

CHAPTER I.

It was a cold, cheerless night, though but the second month in autumn, and "something hot" in great demand at the bar of the "Golden Eagle." The days were beginning to draw in fast, and before eight o'clock every gas-light was ablaze, as customer after customer strolled in.

Everything in connection with the "Golden Eagle" was easy. The landlord, a big, fat man, between forty and fifty, would back to such an extent as to gain for himself the sobriquet of the Plunger, whilst his wife would even venture something out; the chance of a win, and the little ones put their shillings in a sweep. A telegraphic instrument was placed in a conspicuous position; and although over it was a notification that "betting was strictly prohibited," still nothing else was ever talked of the other side of the bar, where were congregated mostly every class of the racing fraternity.

There were no seats, nor anything beyond to induce customers to stay, but still the same faces would be seen there nightly, and the same feet would stand there hour after hour, in one identical spot, to converse night after night on the same subject, when, had they been asked to stand in their own homes one-half the time, they would have deemed it a bore.

"Well, how did you get on, Potts?" said a little man to the landlord, as he now advanced to the partition between the screens on the counter, which served as a gangway for conversational heads.

The Plunger shrugged his shoulders dolorously, as he mixed the liquor the little man had ordered. "Oae out of four," he said; "and that three to two on; but it serves me right," he continued. "I should never have

backed another horse after I threw the can at the cat, which broke the brute's back, and the looking-glass behind."

"What's that?" asked a tall man, who now advanced and took his glass of grog over the little man's head, as the latter moved to his particular corner, and left the gangway in possession of the new comer.

The latter was evidently supposed to be in the know, for a very confidential conversation ensued between him and the landlord, in the course of which a mysterious message on pink paper passed from one to the other, with strict injunctions to keep it dark. The same was read and returned, but humph! was all the connoisseur deigned to say in expression of what he thought.

"That's the horse, my boy!" said the Plunger, for the moment forgetting his previous bad luck, and repocketing the telegram.

"Well," said the tall man, "you may be right, but I'll lay you a pony to a sixpence it'll never run. There'll be some trickery, mark my words."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the landlord, as he nearly let fall the glass he was filling. "Why, they tell me it's a dead certainty, and I have got eight to one," he said, in an undertone, elevating his eyebrows in a mysterious way the while.

"You may have eighty," responded the other, and as a fresh customer entered he retired to the corner where the little man was quietly conversing with the others, opening his blue eyes to their full extent, and as he smiled displaying a set of teeth which any woman might have envied.

The last-comer was a young man of not more than twenty-five; he was tall and well proportioned, and as he entered he cast a cursory glance around him, and advanced to the counter. A tawny, silken moustache hung from his upper lip, so as entirely to hide the same; his eyes were a soft hazel, whilst his

dark brown hair fell in tiny curls over a forehead almost too fair for his sex, a fault which also extended to his close-shaven face.

"Good evening, Mr. Potts," he said, and the Plunger raised his face in a moment, and smiled, the only time he had gladly smiled that evening.

"Good evening, sir," he said. "What is it to be?"

"Oh, the usual," replied the former, and as he took his glass of brandy-and-water he told him to have what he liked himself. "Well, do you know of anything for to-morrow?" he asked, in an undertone.

The Plunger once more took the telegram from his pocket and showed it to him.

The latter scanned it over in a glance. "No good," he said, as he took his cigar from his mouth, and his silken moustache almost brushed the other's cheek; but again replacing his weed, and holding it firmly between his teeth, he brought out a gold pencil-case and wrote a name down on a strip of paper. "Had it direct from the stable," he whispered, as he handed it to him.

The door was again pushed from without, and this time a woman's face peered into the compartment, but it was gone again before those within could discern the features, and a few moments after the owner of the gold pencil-case left the bar.

"Don't you know who he is, Cox?" asked the little man, as the door slammed to after him. "A regular swell, I can tell you. Why, he is buyer in the woollen department of a large firm not a thousand miles from here. Won a heap, I am told, over the last Cambridgeshire. How he gets his information, Heaven only knows. But I tell you, George Sharp will have nothing to do with him. He'd as soon lay the deuce."

"The deuce, he would," laughed Cox. "But what's his name?"

"Oh, Mortimer Mac-Mac something. I forget," was the reply.

"McFarlane," said the tall man. "His father is a parson somewhere in the north, but he left his home in disgrace. The ne'er-do-well of the family; knows as much of business, as business of him; but through some interest got his present berth, and if he sticks to it will be the first thing he ever did stick to in his life."

"Except other folk's tip, if all stories are true that are told of him," said the little man, who was a solicitor's clerk. But the conversation dropped, as Mortimer re-entered and with him a girl, the same as had passed in a few moments before.

She was of medium height. Her figure was lithe and graceful, but the beauty of her face, which was of the Spanish type, consisted in her eyes, in whose dark depths shined a fire, which would blaze forth in the moment of anger as quickly as they would melt and soften to the tones of affection, or laugh as a merry thought passed through her mind.

She was a true daughter of Erin, loving passionately where she had fixed her affection, and hating to the death those who wronged her.

Mortimer called for a glass of wine, and as the girl raised it to her lips,—

"You will come home now, won't you?" she asked, in a plaintive tone.

"Presently," he said, evasively. "You drink your wine; and go, there's a good girl. I don't like you to be here."

She pushed the glass from her, and an angry light shone in her dark eyes, as she raised them to his face.

"I shall not go," she said, "whilst you remain."

A shade of annoyance passed over his countenance. He raised his hat and pushed aside the tiny curls which clustered on his forehead, then, placing the wine again near her, he drank what he had called for himself, and asked if she were ready.

"Why will you stay there, so late, Mortimer?" said the girl, as they left the lights of the "Golden Eagle" behind them. "For hours I wait—wait until I cannot bear it any longer; such horrible imaginations come into my brain that I feel I should go mad if I did not come to you. It is very cruel of you, Mortimer."

"What nonsense, Meggie," he retorted. "You know I cannot always be with you; and haven't you something else to think of besides me now, darling," he said, as he pressed the hand resting on his arm, and looked down on the face upturned to his own.

"I know," she replied. "But much as I love my baby, I should hate him if I thought you did not love me as you used to do. Oh! Mortimer, you are my life, my all," and she clung closer to his side.

"And so you are mine, dear," he answered. "And it is for your sake, and our boy's, that I am always from home, at times when you think I should be there, to make money that neither shall ever know penury or want. However, as you wish it, I will put off an engagement I had this evening, and return with you. Wait a moment," he said, as he hastily entered a stationer's shop, from which he shortly emerged with a letter in his hand. "I have made it all right," and putting it in the first pillar-post they came to, they bent their steps towards home.

The moon had risen in the heavens, and the clear, sharp air seemed to have an exhilarating effect on the girl's spirits. She appeared, for the time, to forget all but his presence, as she chatted cheerfully by his side; but on a sudden her mood changed, as though in thought. She compared her present happiness with the long weary hours of watchfulness and doubt, when she had waited for his coming, and strained each nerve to catch the first sound of his approaching footsteps alone to meet with disappointment.

"Mortimer," she said, "you do love me, don't you?"

"Yes," he replied, impatiently, "you know

I do. Whatever makes you ask such foolish questions?"

"Because," she answered, "I want you to prove to me that love by giving up, for my sake, what you are now doing. You are leaving the substance, Mortimer, and chasing after the shadow; no good ever comes of gambling. Mr. Etheridge was at our place this morning inquiring after you, and made fearful complaints of how you had lately been transacting business. He said the firm would have to know of it sooner or later, and, as a friend of your father's, he spoke for your good. If I were you I should see him at his private office in the morning."

"Etheridge is a meddling old fool," said Mortimer, angrily. "I am sick of the business, and the deuce knows what? I was assumed to accept such a position as they were to place me in it, but the firm shall not have the gratification of kicking me out. I will see Etheridge in the morning."

They had now reached Rathbone-place, where they lived, when they were attracted to where a crowd was collected, in the centre of which stood a lady by the side of a hansom-cab, the horse belonging to which they were unharnessing, as it had fallen down.

She was a tall, fine girl, and, although only her shoulders were visible, one could see she was richly attired. A large hat of black velvet, with feathers of the same hue, rested on a mass of golden curls, which again shrouded a forehead of alabaster whiteness, tinged with pink, relieved the pallor of her complexion, which deepened to a deep crimson, as, in raising her eyes, they rested for a moment on the form of Mortimer; but quickly turning her head she jumped into the cab, giving directions to the man whence to proceed.

CHAPTER II.

A charcoal fire was burning in the breakfast-room of Aescia Lodge, Brecknock-road, notwithstanding that a bright October sun came in, at the glass door, which opened on to a garden, where a few autumnal flowers still kept the approaching winter tide aloof. A peeping ray shone on the silver urn, as it thudded away on the spotless white damask, as if to defy the reflection of the fire on its bright surface, and it rested on the silver haire of an old gentleman, as he turned his back on it, and stretched his legs on the woollen rug before the latter, whilst he scanned the morning paper, only raising his eyes from the same to the little timepiece on the mantel-shelf, which ticked, ticked, regardless of all but the minutes and hence, which it tied ever on, ever, ever, ever.

The door quietly opened, and, followed by a servant who brought in the hot breakfast, a young girl entered the room. She was very tall, and her fully-developed figure gave her the appearance of being older than she really was. She wore a morning robe of Cambridge blue, which set off to advantage her pink and white complexion, whilst her hair, cut short according to the prevailing fashion, was arranged in tiny golden curls all over her shapely head, and shaded her fair forehead. Her eyes were blue as the robe she wore; merry eyes they were, only equalled by a saucy little rosebud of a mouth, which enclosed a row of pearly teeth within.

The old gentleman removed his spectacles and laid down the paper as she advanced towards him, when looking at the little clock,—

"You are very late, Maude, dear," he said.

"Oh! papa, darling," she replied, as bending over him she passed her hand over his grey locks, "I could not sleep, owing to the fright I had last night, till just as it was time to get up, when I fell into a deep slumber. But you are not in a hurry, are you, dear old pet?" And, throwing her arms round his neck, she kissed him perhaps rather more roughly than he cared about, much as he loved her caresses.

"Well, dear," he said, as he seated himself at the table watching her whilst she poured

out the coffee into the prettiest of breakfast china, "so you are none the worse for your last night's adventure?"

"No, papa," she replied, as she handed him a cup; "but it was anything but pleasant to be the centre of attraction in the midst of an admiring throng, and I was very glad when my John once more took the reins and drove me off."

"Let's see," said Mr. Etheridge, "you told me you had intended going to see your aunt when the accident occurred. Are you going to-night?"

The girl stooped, so that the urn might serve as a screen to hide the deep crimson flush which mantled her cheek, ever mounting to her brow, where the golden curls rested.

"No, papa, dear; I don't think so. I shall stay at home with you. It won't be business to night, will it?" and she looked up with a smile on the saucy mouth it was hard to resist.

The servant now entered with the morning letters, and handed them to Maude, whose office it had been from childhood to distribute. She was an only child, her mother she never knew; and Mr. Etheridge almost idolized the daughter left to him—his hope, his ambition, his life all rested on her; and for her he acted in all he did.

Mr. Etheridge was manager to the firm of Murrell, Murrell and Co., High Holborn. He had commenced life as office-boy in the same establishment, but had risen step by step until he now held his present position.

"There you are, papa!" she said, as taking one from the heap of letters she handed the rest to her father, "there are your nasty, ugly, blue things."

Mr. Etheridge turned over each with a casual glance, as he laid down his knife and fork after finishing his breakfast, till one larger than the others, with the stamp of the firm on the envelope, attracted his attention.

He opened it hastily. It was from Mortimer McFarlane, resigning the post he held at Murrell, Murrell and Co.

"What is the matter?" asked Maude, as Mr. Etheridge pushed his plate from him and rose from the table.

"Nothing particular, dear; only a young fellow, whose father I knew well, has resigned a situation which it took all my interest, and an immensity of trouble, too, to obtain for him. But I wash my hands clean of him. He'll never be any good, and no good will ever come of him!" and denouncing him as a thankless scapegrace, he put on his coat, and kissing the girl who still sat sipping her coffee, left the room.

The door had scarcely closed behind him when Maude, taking the letter from her bosom where she had secreted it, unseen by her father, broke the seal.

It was a hasty scrawl, written in pencil, and ran thus:—"Don't be angry, dearest; unforeseen circumstances over which I had no control compelled me to break my appointment this evening. Same time, same place, to-morrow. Will you come? I think you will.—Ever yours, GERALD."

She read and re-read it, and then, tearing it into tiny pieces, threw it on the fire.

"Surely I was mistaken," she said. "Yes, I will go. I wonder what time papa will be at home," and, ringing the bell, she asked the servant who answered it, if Mr. Etheridge left word what time he would return.

"Dinner is ordered for six, miss," was the reply.

The day passed drearily and heavily with Maude until her father's return, which did not bring with it its usual cheerfulness. Mr. Etheridge seemed worried and annoyed; so much so as almost to forget the kiss for his daughter, which was his first thought on other occasions.

"Why should it affect you so much?" said Maude, as they discussed the matter after dinner, Mr. Etheridge having told her how Mortimer had acted—how the latter had verbally resigned the situation, as he had done

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by letter; how he had for the sake of the old friend, whose son he was, told him how foolish it was on his part to throw away a good salary unless he had something better in view; and ended by advising him to think the matter over again; but Mortimer was determined, almost insolent, declaring that determination to be final, and so the matter ended.

"It affects me so far, Maudie," her father replied, "for I loved the lad. His father and yours were such friends as one seldom meets. We helped each other in boyhood, and we clung to each other in riper years; and although, as time rolled on, we became separated in our different callings, still the memory of old days clung to me. And, Maudie, dear," he said, drawing the girl near to him, "I had a dream for you in the future; but man proposes, darling, God disposes."

A blush came over her face as she rose to draw his easy chair, his accustomed seat, to the fire; when, seeing him comfortably ensconced in the same, she let him dream on in the past, silently sitting beside him, her hand lovingly playing with his grey hair; until the wearied eyes closed, and the heavy breathing told her sleep had for a time brought him forgetfulness; when, rising, she quietly went to the window, from which she drew the heavy curtains, and looked out into the night. The cold wind of the previous evening had passed away and a slight breeze, almost like a breath of summer air, gently stirred the yellow leaves and made them rustle as they fell one by one to the earth from whence they sprang; but as the chimes of a distant clock struck eight the softly replaced the drapery and quietly left the room.

And Mr. Etheridge still slept on, dreaming may be of the friend of his youth, and that friend's sister, who had strengthened the tie between them, his heart's first love; so early lost that, although in after years he wooed and wed, still the memory of that first love never went from his heart.

And at the trysting-place by the Gloucester-gate Maudie awaited her lover's coming. He wanted yet five minutes to the appointed time when she saw him alight from a hansom but a few paces from where she stood.

"I was fearful of keeping you waiting, darling. Have you been here long?" he asked.

"Not more than five minutes, Gerald," she replied. "But what made you fail me last night?" she asked. "Do you know I had half a mind not to meet you now?"

"Well, I can only say I am a lucky fellow that the best half was in my favour," he replied. "I was called away on important business last night, and could not leave until it was too late. Am I forgiven?"

"I suppose so," she said; "but I thought I saw you as, finding you not here, I took a cab to my aunt's. Well, the horse fell just as we were near Oxford-street. I jumped out, and as it was some time before they placed him on his legs again, as you may guess, a crowd collected, of which I was the centre of attraction; and I declare I thought you were one in it."

"Not I," he responded. "What on earth should make you think such a thing? But, Maudie, you are ever suspicious. What makes you so doubtful? Do you believe me to be a gentleman or not?"

"Did I think otherwise, Gerald, I should not be here to-night," she replied. "But why will you not tell me of yourself—of your family? You know, dear, how we first met, without introduction—as perfect strangers. My whole life is in your keeping, and yet I am in ignorance as to whom I have entrusted my happiness."

"Maudie," he said, as in the soft shadow of the autumnal gloaming he passed his arm round her waist, "wait but a little, and you shall know all. I tell you how fondly I love you. I am free to make you my wife—my darling wife; and I swear by the heaven above us I will do so. Trust me, dearest; it is but a passing shadow; there is a bright future before

us. My father just now is incensed against me; and was I to tell him of our engagement—having another object in view for me—he would perhaps—indeed, most probably would—disinherit me. You could not face poverty, nor would I ask you to do so. We are young, darling, and must wait, unless—"

"Unless what, Gerald?" asked Maudie. "You consent to what I proposed—a secret marriage," he replied.

"Gerald, I cannot," she said. "Then your love is not like mine, Maudie," he said, as he withdrew his arm from her waist, with a sad pathos in his voice.

"Oh, Gerald!" she cried, her blue eyes filling with tears, "if you only knew how fondly I love you you would not talk so. Give me one night to reflect, and to-morrow at this time, at the old trysting-gate, I will either yield to your request or give you up for ever."

They had wandered round in the deepening gloom until they reached where a gate opened to the main road; there they stood but a moment to catch a passing cab. The sky had become so overcast that the moon was no longer visible.

"Then to-morrow, darling," Gerald was saying in a low tone, as beneath the glimmer of the gas-lamp Maudie saw a servant-girl pass hurriedly by. Her dress brushed against him, but she did not turn, as she hastily approached a woman coming in the opposite direction.

"Can you tell me where Dr. Blisset lives?" she said. "I know it is somewhere in Marylebone road, but I can't find the number."

"Oh, I'll show you," said the woman. "I'm going that way," and they both repassed where Gerald and Maudie still stood.

The girl stared into the face of the latter, and then with her companion turned into the main road, as, repeating the words to-morrow, Gerald hailed a passing cab, into which he assisted Maudie Etheridge.

CHAPTER III.

It was late when Mortimer and Meggie entered their apartments in Rathbone-place, and as their little servant opened the door, there was a scared look on the girl's face.

"Oh, ma'am!" she exclaimed, "I'm so glad that's you. Baby has been that bad I was afraid to be alone with him."

"Why, what is the matter?" said Meggie, as she rushed up the stairs to where the child lay, his little hands clenched, and his pretty features drawn in convulsions. "Oh! my baby—my baby!" she cried, as lifting him from the bed she took him on her lap before the fire.

The landlady now entered the room, Meggie having sent the girl for her, and the usual remedies having been applied, under her directions and superintendence, the little sufferer became better.

"Lor, don't fret," she said, as Meggie's tears fell fast on the baby's face. "He's teething; but he'll get over it, won't ye, my cherub," she continued, as she took the child from his mother's lap. "He's going to sleep, bless 'is heart! Lor, there's no accountin' for babies—here to-day and gone to-morrow; and just as ye thinks for to order their coffin they wakes up and laughs at ye for the fright they had given ye."

"Do you think he will be all right, Mrs. Coppin?" asked Mortimer, who with his arms folded stood watching the whole scene, only now and then giving a word of comfort to the young mother as she leant over the suffering babe.

"You just go and get me a soothing powder," she said, addressing the servant-girl; and then, turning to Mortimer, "Lor, yes, sir," she continued. "He'll be lively enough in the morning. Now I'll just give him a little of this," she said, as the powder was handed to her, "and we shall see how he goes on."

But the morning came, and with it but slight improvement in the baby; and Meggie clung to her husband, praying him not to be

late. She was nervous and excited; she had had but little sleep that night, and a presentiment of coming trouble seemed to hang over her.

Mrs. Coppin came in to see how she was, but a grave look came over the woman's face as she bent over the child's cot. The half-closed eyes, the heavy breathing and twitching of the infant's frame made her anxious as to his condition.

"What do you think of him, Mrs. Coppin?" said Meggie, as she nervously watched the expression of the landlady's face. "You don't think him worse, do you?"

"No," was the reply. "I don't think him worse; but if he ain't better after awhile, you'd better send for Dr. Blisset; he's wonderful clever with children."

A ring at the bell summoned Mrs. Coppin from the room. Mortimer had gone to the City, and Meggie was alone, save for the servant-girl who came in and out of the apartment. She was alone with her babe—alone with her sorrow. Hour after hour of the weary day passed, and still she watched by the little cot until late in the afternoon. Overcome by fatigue her head dropped on the pillow and she fell into a deep slumber.

Mrs. Coppin had come in; she had stood for a few moments to watch the sleepers—the babe's face and the mother's, little more than a child herself—as they rested side by side. It was growing dark and the daylight threw fantastic shadows over the room. She was about to retire as a scream from the cot arrested her footsteps. Meggie raised her head with a startled look on her countenance.

"Oh! Mrs. Coppin," she said, "are you here? Baby, my darling, my darling, what is it?" and she again bent over the little bed.

It was not like the scream of a child, but more like that of an animal.

"Mrs. McFarlane," said Mrs. Coppin, "let the girl go for the doctor."

"Do you think him so bad?" cried Meggie, as the tears rolled down her poor, pale face. "Don't say he will die! I don't say he will die!" and her sobs reached through the room.

"Hush, hush," said the woman, as she bade her be quiet for his sake, whilst she gazed on the tiny head rolling from side to side with an unconscious look in the baby's eyes. "While there's life there's hope. But he is very bad. Your husband ought to be here."

Meggie rose at the woman's words, and looking at the time-piece—

"It is nearly nine o'clock," she said.

"Sorely, Mrs. Coppin, it can't be so late. I must have been asleep a long time. Why, I did not think it more than six. And I have had such a dreadful dream. I thought I was going into church—the old church where I went as a child—and I was all in white; but I thought it so dark I could not find my way, and I groped round by the ivy until I came against a buttress and then I tumbled; and as I stooped to see the cause, I found a lifeless child at my feet. It was my own. Oh, baby, baby, they shall not take you from me!" she cried, as she buried her face in the child's bed.

"Hush, Mrs. McFarlane," said Mrs. Coppin. "You must not get so excited" for the girl's face was flushed, and her dark eyes flashed as she raised her head in an outburst of passion.

Dr. Blisset now entered, and removing his hat and gloves approached the cot. The little head still rolled from side to side. Mrs. Coppin told him of the scream and the convulsions of the previous evening.

"Humph!" replied the doctor. "And are you the mother?" he asked of Meggie, who was doing all in her power to make her pretty face ugly, as she sobbed out an affirmative.

"Humph," he again repeated, as removing the coverlid he gently touched the wrist of the little sufferer, then placing his hand on the top of the child's head. With a grave face he arose from the seat that had been placed for him, and patting Meggie on the shoulder bade her be a good girl and leave off crying.

"Oh, doctor," said the girl, as she in

pulsively seized his hand, and raised her eyes imploringly to his. "Do tell me he will not die. Say he will live—he will, he shall!" and she let loose her hold, as she saw and read her answer in his face.

"Mrs. McFarlane," he replied, solemnly, "life and death is in other hands than ours. You must trust in Heaven."

"In Heaven!" she exclaimed, passionately. Ah! doctor, then I know that you do not think my poor boy will live! Ah! it is too much—too much to bear. And he not here! Ah! I cannot endure it—I cannot—I cannot," and she buried her face in her hands, as she threw herself on her knees beside the infant's bed.

"There is no hope. He cannot live through the night," said the doctor in a low tone, as Mrs. Coppin followed him downstairs; "but I will be round in the morning," and closing the street door after him Mrs. Coppin again ascended to the sick-room.

As she entered Meggie had left the child's couch. She was washing her face. All traces of tears were gone from her eyes. They were full of fire, and seemed as though they would scorch in their sockets.

"Mrs. Coppin," she said, as her voice shook with excitement, "will you remain here whilst I go for him?" and she pointed to the time-piece.

It was close on ten o'clock, and out into the clear October night went Meggie, whilst the tiny life so enwrapped in her own was fast ebbing away in the silent room where Mrs. Coppin and the servant-girl alone watched on for the last moments.

The Plunger was very sulky, and went through his business in a quiet, reserved manner, which all his customers knew too well meant bad luck.

"Lost his hap'ence," said the little man to the tall man, as he stood in his accustomed place displaying his white, even teeth, and opening to his full extent his blue eyes as he alluded to the sulkiness on the other side of the counter.

"Stupid fool! I told him so," replied the tall man. "Hadn't a ghost of a chance! My belief is they are 'aving him nicely. He blabs like an old woman, until any one can get the information he thinks he has on the quiet."

"You know that swell I pointed out to you the other night, Cox?" said the little man. "He's got it 'ot, I'm told."

"Yes, and you'll 'ave it 'ot, too, if you don't mind where you're comin' to!" said a big fellow, as the little man in stepping back almost had a glass of hot whisky down his back.

"Oh! beg pardon," replied the latter, as he looked up into the other's face, and, recognizing an old pal, smiled. "How are you, Stockings?" he said.

Stockings was a hoiser, who in a small way carried on business in that line; or, rather, his wife did, for he was more often at the bar of the Golden Eagle than behind the counter in Leather-lane.

"So he got it, did he?" said Cox, referring to the little man's views respecting Mortimer.

"No, that's just what he didn't do," laughed the tall man, with a haw, haw; heard all over the bar.

"He had on 'Scotch Chief' to win a thousand!" said the little man in a low tone to Cox.

"Well, I am sorry for him," said a gentlemanly-looking man with a big corporation and a jolly, good-tempered looking face, fat and almost as red as the scarf he wore; "he has had very bad luck lately. Betts has had him to the tune of a few hundreds, I know."

"But where does he get the money from?" said Cox. "He must win a lot at times; I don't suppose his salary is over three hundred, is it?"

"Not that," replied the little man; "but that's the puzzle."

The door was now opened as if by a nervous hand, and a woman's face just looked round

and then disappeared, to return again in a few moments.

She timidly entered this time and cast her dark eyes over the compartment, when, advancing to the conversational gangway, as Stockings made room for her; the Plunger came forward.

It was only a simple question, which none but the Plunger could hear, and as she received the answer she left without another look at those who were all fixing their eyes on her.

The door swung behind her, and the quarter of an hour she stood outside the "Golden Eagle" seemed an eternity. Poor Meggie, she could hear her heart thump, thump against her side, and the tears welled into her eyes as she watched the customers come and go; and no Mortimer, no husband to soothe and comfort her in her great trouble.

"I will wait but another quarter," she said to herself, as she heard a clock strike the half-hour. "May be, he is gone home; he knew baby was ill, and perhaps would not be here to-night;" and, changing her mind, she was just leaving as Mortimer turned the corner.

"You here, Meggie!" he said. "How long have you been waiting?"

"Not long," she said, as the tears rolled down her cheeks. "Oh! Mortimer, come home, our baby is dying, my heart is breaking. Come home, darling, don't go there to-night," and she pointed to the doors which now opened, as the little man came out.

"Good night!" he said, as he saw Mortimer, a salute which the other scarcely returned, as linking Meggie's arm within his own he led her home.

Mrs. Coppin was still watching beside the child's cot, and in answer to Meggie's inquiries said, "she thought he was a little better."

The girl's spirit rose in an instant as she gazed on the sleeping infant. Telling her husband how, at Mrs. Coppin's suggestion, she had sent for Dr. Blisset, who, she said, was very clever with children. "But, what is it, Mortimer?" she asked as she thought he gave a start.

"Nothing, Meggie!" he replied. "But you are enough to make a fellow nervous. One moment you are sobbing fit to break your heart, and the next, because there is a slight improvement, you think there is no cause for alarm."

He was standing with his back to the fire, his arms crossed over his breast, whilst a revulsion of feelings seemed to be passing through his mind as he fixed his eyes on the suffering babe.

For some moments he remained in deep thought, as, with bowed head, he still watched the girl who was the mother of his boy, till with a sigh he turned from the scene and leant his arms on the chimney-piece behind. He took one glance at his face in the glass. How careworn he had become! And there were lines under his eyes which had no right to be there.

"Meggie," he said at last, as advancing to where she sat by the child's bed he passed his hand over her raven locks, "can you forgive me for leaving you so much alone? But you know, dear, I cannot help it."

"Don't talk so now," she replied; "I can only think of him at this time," and she pointed to the baby, who had fallen into a quiet slumber. "Do you think he will live, Mortimer?"

"I cannot say," he said. "He seems to be sleeping nicely now."

And in the morning the little life still trembled in the balance.

"Meggie," said Mortimer, as he was preparing to go to business, "I do not think I shall be home for a day or two. Most urgent business will necessitate my leaving town, which I should have told you last night had you not been in such distress; but you will bear up for my sake, won't you, dear? Our boy seems better, and will yet, may be, get over it."

She was sitting by the fire, the babe in her

lap, and as his words fell on her ears she colour for a moment mantled her face with crimson, to leave it the next white as marble.

"Mortimer," she said, "there is something wrong; I know it—I feel there is. Why are you going away so suddenly? Why was Mr. Etheridge here again yesterday, and said he had not seen you? And you seem so strange, I cannot understand."

"Meggie," he replied, "I am in trouble, and for a time it is imperative that I should not be found here. You say you love me; then, dearest, for my sake, your own, and his"—and he pointed to the sleeping babe—"don't hinder me. Every moment that I stay is fraught with danger. Kiss me, darling, and let me go," and bending low he pressed the weeping girl to his breast, imprinted a parting kiss on the infant, and was gone.

Meggie heard the door close behind him, and with it closed for her the happiness of her life. She could not weep, her sorrow seemed to have turned to a fire, which burnt in her brain and flashed from her dark eyes, which appeared as living coals within her head.

How long she remained still, sitting with the baby on her lap, she knew not; never for a moment did those fiery eyes rest on him; she never noticed the twitching of the tiny features, nor the convulsive clench of the infant hands, but as a loud double knock resounded on the street door, she arose, pressing the babe in his last death agony to her bosom, and fell heavily to the floor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE knock which had been so audible to poor Meggie was replied to by Mrs. Coppin, whose surprise was great as, on opening the door, she discovered two police officers, who demanded to see Mr. McFarlane.

"He is not at home," was the reply.

"We must satisfy ourselves on that point," said the plain-clothes man, civilly, whilst at the same time he showed her a warrant for the apprehension of Mortimer McFarlane on the charge of forgery, and asked her to show them his rooms.

"Oh! dearie me—dearie me!" said the good-natured landlady, as begging them to allow her to enter the room first she ascended the stairs.

But there was no response to her gentle tap at the door, and after trying again to attract the attention of those within with the same effect, she turned the handle. All was silent as the grave, but as she entered she uttered a piercing scream, as she rushed to where Meggie still lay with her dead infant.

One of the men now advanced—he was the detective—as he feared something worse had occurred.

"This is bad business," he said, as he lifted the unconscious girl, whilst Mrs. Coppin took from her arms the lifeless babe.

"Yes," replied the latter. "Poor thing! she has fainted. He has gone at last, sweet lamb," she continued, referring to the child, "though the breath is scarce out of his body. You just lay her here, mister," she said, as she pointed to the couch, whilst she closed the eyes of the dead baby, telling the officer at the same time, how that the doctor had given him up yesterday.

But the man took no heed of what she was saying. His eyes were fixed intently on the young mother's face, whilst he was visibly striving to hide the emotion passing within him as he gently chafed her hands to restore animation; when turning to the uniform man who remained a silent spectator of the scene.

"We must go now, Gibbons," he said. "It's of no use stopping here. We'd better give in our report. Mrs. —" he said, before following Gibbons, who was now in the passage.

"Coppin, sir," returned the landlady. "Well, Mrs. Coppin," he replied, as taking a pencil from his pocket he wrote on a leaf from his book, "Jack Bourne," and handed it to her, saying, "When she comes

to,"—looking towards the sofa—"give her that; it will find me at the — station; and if I can do her any service, I will. Good-bye."

He was gone, and save for the presence of the little servant-girl, who was sobbing her heart out at the death of the baby, Mrs. Coppin was alone in that chamber of sorrow with the mother whom she was endeavouring to bring back to consciousness.

At last the large, dark eyes unclosed as once more Meggie awakened to a sense of her heavy trouble. She gave one look around the silent room, and seeing Mrs. Coppin by her side, asked her in a low voice for her infant.

For a moment the woman did not reply, and Meggie knew from her silence that the end had come; but she gave no sign that she was aware of the truth. She lay there quiet and resigned. No tear escaped from under the snowy lids, which for a moment fell over the burning eyes; she merely pressed the hand of the kind-hearted landlady, who was more alarmed at this sudden revulsion of feeling than if a fit of hysteria had been the result.

"You feel better now, don't you?" she said, kindly. "Try and sit up a bit, and let me wash your face and brush your hair; it'll revive you."

And without waiting for a reply, she went into the next room, ostensibly for the basin, but really to whisper to little Mary not to say a word to her mistress of the policeman's visit.

To all Mrs. Coppin suggested Meggie silently agreed, as only by monosyllables she responded to any question the good woman might ask. Her mind seemed absorbed in the heavy trouble, which appeared to have stunned her by its weight.

"If I could see her cry," said Mrs. Coppin. But no sign of a tear moistened those hot, burning eyes. She never alluded to her husband's departure. She never made any comment on the death of the child; and thus the weary hours passed. And not until the tiny coffin was brought in the following day did Meggie seem to realize her loss. Not till then—when she saw her babe asconced within the lace which bordered his narrow bed—did her grief find vent. The long pent tears burst forth, and as they welled from beneath her eyelids they brought the relief she needed, and saved her reason.

"And he not here, Mrs. Coppin!" she cried, as she buried her face in her hands. "Oh! my heart will break, my heart will break!"

"Hush," said Mrs. Coppin. "Mr. McFarlane will be here soon." She dared not yet tell her that the police had been there for him. But the girl seemed to read what was passing in her mind.

"Never," she replied. "Mrs. Coppin, there is something wrong. I know there is; you look so strange. And I fancied I heard someone speaking when I could not utter a word, and the sound of a strange step seemed to fall upon my senses, although it all appeared as a terrible nightmare. You are so good, so kind. Do tell me?" and she threw herself on her knees and buried her face in the lap of her companion.

"Mrs. McFarlane," replied the other, "there was a stranger here to-day who wanted to see your husband; but you must not excite yourself. Here is his name," and she took from her bosom the leaf torn from the detective's book.

Meggie raised her tear-stained face, and taking the paper from the woman's hand, she startled to her feet, as she exclaimed,—

"Jack Bourne! Mrs. Coppin," she continued, excitedly. "why did he come here? Tell me, tell me. I must know the truth. Do not deceive me. I shall go mad! Tell me, did he, did this man," and she pointed to the name on the paper, "see me?"

"Why, lor, y'c," replied the other. "You were in a dead swoon; and he helped me to lift you to the couch. And a nice, gentle fellow he is, too, although he be a policeman. But if you are going to take on like that, you won't get nothing out o' me," and Mrs. Coppin

looked at the girl before her, who with dilated eyes and heaving bosom seemed about to faint. But her words had the desired effect. With a strong effort Meggie overcame the great excitement, under which she was labouring, that she might hear more from her companion, as she nerved herself for the worst.

"I promise to be quiet," she said. "Forgive me, Mrs. Coppin, and do tell me all."

"Your husband is in trouble," she said. "And the best way you can serve him is in helping him to evade the police—by keeping quietly where you are, and not letting him in any way communicate with you here. If you move you will be watched; and you may only endanger his safety by following wherever he is."

"I do not know," replied Meggie. "He never told me. But if it is only that, Mrs. Coppin, which keeps him away—"

"Only that!" echoed Mrs. Coppin. "Forgery, only that!" and in her virtuous indignation she almost forgot the young heart breaking before her. "Well, upon my word!"

"Forgery, did you say?" asked Meggie. "Oh, heaven! has it come to that? Mrs. Coppin, forgive me. But I did not think it was so bad; but I feared —" and she again burst into tears.

"Feared what?" said the woman who hastily repented of her harshness. "There, don't cry."

"Mrs. Coppin," said the girl, "you are so kind. I think, had I had a mother like you it would have been different; but I had no one to guide me. My father's second wife was cruel; and I hated her. You will keep my secret, won't you?" she continued, as she threw her arms around the landlady's neck.

"Lor! bless you! yes," replied the latter. "Do you think I'd send any poor fellow to prison? not I. Make your mind easy on that."

"But that is not all," said Meggie. "I am alone in the world now. I have not a friend or relative who will open their doors to me. I must get some employment to earn my bread. I used to do dressmaking once," she paused for a moment as though her thoughts were wandering in the past; and a shadow of pain passed over her face as she said, "I can do that now."

"Well, well, we'll see about it by-and-by," said Mrs. Coppin. "You're not without a shilling or two to go on with; and you shan't starve whilst I have a crust. But why not go to the gentleman who was here this morning. He told me to say if you wanted a friend he would be one to you."

"He!" exclaimed the girl. "Ask him to help me! Only one thing would ever take me there, Mrs. Coppin," she continued, after awhile, during which she remained in deep thought. "You said you would be my friend; you promised to keep my secret—the secret of my life. I should like to remain here until Mortimer—if he ever does—comes back; but not until you know my history, not until you know who it is that you are befriending, will I take bite or sup beneath your roof. And when you know all, if you then cast me from you, I will go amongst strangers to earn my daily pittance. But, oh! Mrs. Coppin, I know you will not add to my sorrow. Mortimer is gone, my darling is dead; and but for you I am alone—alone in a cruel and pitiless world."

"What great sin can you have committed in your nineteen years, that I, an old woman, who has weathered many a storm, should drive you forth?" said Mrs. Coppin, as she nestled the girl to her bosom. And there in the dim light, with the stillness of death shadowing around them, she heard, amid her sobs, the story of Meggie's life.

CHAPTER V.

It was ten o'clock ere Maude Etheridge re-entered Acacia Lodge. Her father had awoke, and was busily engaged looking over some papers; he looked up as she advanced to where he sat.

"Why, Maude," he said, "have you been out? I thought you promised to remain with me this evening."

"So I did, papa," she replied; "but you fell fast asleep; and the evening being so beautiful I thought I would take a stroll. You have not been awake long, have you, dear?"

"No, not long," he answered. "But now that you have come in I will put away these papers, and you will give me some music. I feel I should enjoy it to night."

Maude removed her hat and cape, and opening the piano selected such songs as she knew her father most loved; but her heart was not in her song. Her thoughts were of Gerald, and the promise she had made him but an hour since. And as she looked on her father's grey hairs she wavered in her resolve to do as the former wished her. But, then, her lover was absent. And as she recalled the tender words of that night's meeting, which she felt if she did not accede to his proposals would be the last, her courage gave way, and she knew that the happiness of her life depended on him.

She arose from the piano, and bringing a low stool sat down at the old man's feet, whilst she rested her head on his knees.

"What! are you tired so soon, dear?" he said, as he passed his hands over the soft curls.

"Tired! Do you know what the time is, papa?" she asked.

He raised his eyes to the clock; it was nearly midnight.

"I had no idea it was so late, my child. But sit here a few moments longer, and then you shall go to bed. Do you know, Maude, it was your mother's favourite seat, and—"

Maude looked up from where she sat.

"Papa," she said, "you have never told me of my mother. Did she die when I was too young to know her?"

"She did not die," he replied, and Maude thought his tone had never sounded so harsh.

"Then she is not dead?" exclaimed the girl. "Do tell me of my mother."

"To me, yes," he answered. "She died that night, when like you she sat at my knee, and I passed my hand over her sunny locks; it was for the last time. The next day she left me with my dishonoured name, and with you; but it is late, Maude, very late. Good night, darling! Go to bed."

And Maude pondered deep that night over her father's strange manner. And what was the history of the mother she never knew, and of whom he would speak no further; and she heard each stroke of the distant chiming strike the early hours of morning ere the sleep she courted visited her eyelids.

The subject of the preceding evening was not alluded to when she met her father at the breakfast table the following morning. Mr. Etheridge seemed in a measure to have recovered his usual spirits; and at the close of the meal, after kissing her affectionately, prepared to put on his overcoat before proceeding to his business.

He was about to leave the room, when she arose from the table where her breakfast remained untasted, and laying her hands on his shoulders.

"Kiss me once more, papa, dear!" she said.

He gazed down into her sweet, winsome face, holding her at arm's length the while, then pressing her close to his bosom.

"Heaven forbid!" he said, inaudibly, not in reply to her request, but as if in answer to a sudden thought which passed through his mind; and then, with one last look, he left the room.

The senior partner of the firm of Marrell, Marrell and Co. was there on his arrival, and demanded his presence in his private office without delay.

Samuel Marrell was a middle-aged man of medium height, though a little more than medium size; he was thick-set, with broad, fat shoulders, surmounted by an equally fat neck and bullet head, but he was gentlemanly in

the extreme. All he did was gentlemanly; if he swore it was in the tone of a gentleman. If he desired to relieve himself of an undesirable companion he would not kick him out, but open the door, and in the blindest tones request him to leave the room.

When Mr. Etheridge was ushered into his presence on this identical morning he arose, wished him good day, and, pointing to a chair, bid him be seated.

"I desire to see you, Mr. Etheridge, on a most unpleasant matter"—here he paused, whilst he pushed back the quick of his spotless, filbert-shaped nails, to show more plainly the half moons on the same.

"I am sure anything unpleasant should have occurred, Mr. Murrell," replied the other, as he nervously awaited the gentlemanly disclosure.

"You introduced to the firm, some months since, a young fellow named Mortimer McFarlane," he continued, as, resting his elbows on the arms of his semi-round chair, he brought the fat, white hands close together and fixed his eyes on the manager.

"I did so," was the reply.

"And you believed him to be, as you represented him to be—an honest man," said Mr. Murrell.

"Mr. Murrell," exclaimed Mr. Etheridge, "for Heaven's sake, explain what has occurred?"

"All in good time," answered the former, as he unlocked a drawer of his table and brought out a slip of paper, whilst he repeated, "You believed him to be honest?"

"Decidedly," replied the other. "But what should make you ask the question?"

"And you did not know the reason he was banished from his father's roof," continued Mr. Murrell, regardless of the excitement under which his companion was suffering.

"I knew he and his father were not friends; but of the cause of their disagreement I was in total ignorance," was the reply.

"And you introduced him to the firm without making inquiries respecting it," Mr. Murrell said.

"Mr. Murrell," said the other, "his father, a clergyman in the North of England, was my old and trusted friend; a truer man never broke the bread of life. Mortimer was an only son and spoilt boy, but further I knew no harm of the lad. He was a wild youth; but I believed him before Heaven to be honest and true. Tell me, have you found him otherwise?"

"Look at that," was the reply, and he handed the paper he held to the manager.

It was a bill drawn by Mortimer McFarlane for four hundred and fifty pounds, and accepted by Samuel Murrell, of the firm of Murrell, Murrell, and Co.

"Is that my signature, Mr. Etheridge?" asked the senior partner.

"To the best of my belief no," was the reply, in a tone of mental pain.

On a sudden, as the whole truth flashed on him, Mr. Etheridge felt almost unable to stand against the cruel blow thus dealt him by the son of his early friend.

"And whose do you believe it to be?" asked his companion, as he could not fail to see the agony depicted on the other's countenance.

"It is a clumsy forgery, of course, Mr. Murrell. Mortimer is not here this morning."

"He has not been here for the last three days," was the reply. "You saw when this became due?" and he pointed to the forged bill.

For a moment both were silent. Mr. Murrell felt for the gray head bowed before him, but heaving a sigh almost approaching a groan. His companion raised his eyes to his face, with a faint ray of hope issuing from their depths, as he asked him what steps he proposed taking.

"I have already placed the matter in the hands of the police," was the reply; "and when they are arrested, Mr. Etheridge, we shall

call upon you. Until then"—and he handed him a roll of bank-notes—"good morning."

It was a quarter's salary due, in addition to another in lieu of notice.

"Mr. Murrell," exclaimed the old man, as he arose from his seat, "what is this? Surely you do not mean to dismiss me from the firm which I have served well and faithfully from the time when, as a lad, I sat at your desk? Oh, Heaven, this is terrible—terrible. Think of the years I have passed here—from the curly-headed boy, to the time when the curls changed to this," and he raised his hand to his grey locks, "and can a charge of dishonesty be ever brought against me?"

"I do not say there has been," Mr. Murrell replied, "and the fact of your having been so many years trusted and respected here, when, as you say, in my father's time you commenced as office-boy, should have made you more careful in investigating the character of anyone you introduced to the firm. You say you have known Mortimer McFarlane from his infancy, and yet you were in perfect ignorance of what we discovered in a few days, which was, that the reason of his leaving, or rather being banished from his father's house, was the fact that he had robbed him to a great extent."

"Mr. Murrell," he replied, "I declare before Heaven I never knew it. I was told, and believed it to be true, that he had formed a disreputable connection, and that his father for that denied him his presence."

He pushed the notes from him.

"I cannot take them," he said; "they will not bring me what I have worked for—an unsullied name, a blameless reputation. For that I strove, and before Heaven and truth it is mine. Mr. Murrell, will you recall your cruel words? Oh! do not visit on me the sin of another. You say you believe me honest, then prove it by retracting what you have said. To be banished in disgrace after over forty years in the old firm would break my heart."

For a moment he forgot his companion's presence, as burying his face in his hands he groaned aloud. The next his manhood prevailed, and rising from the chair into which he had fallen he became calm, as, apologizing for his sudden outbursts of emotion, he begged Mr. Murrell to overlook his weakness.

"Mr. Etheridge," said the latter, as he held out his hand, "my faith in your integrity is unshaken. Individually, I would tell you this moment to continue in the position you have filled so many years, but I am not alone, as you know, in this business. I must consult my co-partners; however, I will use my influence on your behalf so far as I am able, and, in the meanwhile, I trust you will let no private feeling on your part induce you to interfere with the ends of justice with respect to this scamp."

He rose as he finished this sentence, and Mr. Etheridge knew further appeal was of no avail; he must await the decision he had promised should be communicated to him as soon as possible, and thanking him for advocating his cause he left the room.

The bank-notes still remained where he had left them, and Mr. Murrell carefully replaced them in the drawer; until matters should be finally settled.

And with a sad heart Mr. Etheridge turned his steps from Holborn. The ambition of his life had died, was cast from him for ever. Even should he be reinstated as manager, could he ever now dream of one day being a partner? To go to Mortimer's lodgings he knew would be useless. Of course he would not be there. He could not return home before the usual time, as he determined to hide from Maude his great trouble, and listlessly he wandered from place to place until the hour arrived that he generally made his appearance at Acacia Lodge.

Both were so absorbed in their own thoughts that neither noticed the calm quiet of each. Dinner was served and eaten, with scarcely a sentence being uttered by either; and only

when the cloth was removed and the dessert placed on the table, did Maude nestle to her father's side. The little timepieces still ticked away the fleeting moments, and she thought the time never passed so quickly before, and a guilty flush suffused her face as she thought of the step she was about to take.

Worn out by the strain on body and mind Mr. Etheridge at last found relief in sleep; how long he thus remained in unconsciousness he knew not; but when he awoke it was to a sense of loneliness. The fire had died out, and he was alone. The hour was late; all seemed quiet in the house, and concluding Maude had not wished to disturb him, he thought she had gone to bed; and after turning out the gas he retired also.

The morning came bright and clear. A splendid sun shone in on the silver urn as it hissed away on the spotless damask; and it played again on Mr. Etheridge's silver head, as he sat in the breakfast-room awaiting his daughter. He had never known her to be so late before; probably she was tired, and the day would be quite long enough. He would have his breakfast and send hers up to her room.

"Mary," he said, as a neat servant-girl answered the bell, "take up this breakfast to Miss Etheridge, and tell her not to hurry. I shall not wait."

The girl took the tray and left the room; but quickly returned with a scared look on her face.

"Mr. Etheridge, sir," she said, "Miss Maude is not in her room; but I found this on her dressing-table," and she placed a tiny, pink note in her master's hand.

Mr. Etheridge tore open the letter, regardless of the maid's presence, who with eyes of eager expectation watched her master's proceedings.

It contained but few words, and those blotched with the tears of the writer, merely telling him she had linked her faith with Gerald Norman. There were reasons that she could not state that their marriage should be a secret one; and then begging him to forgive her, she signed herself his unhappy Maude.

He read it to the end; and as the iron entered into his soul, he tore it into fragments and threw them on the burning coals.

"Please, sir, can I do anything else?"

It was Mary speaking, and thus bringing him to the recollection of her presence.

"No, Mary; but wait one moment," he added. "Never let Miss Maude's name be mentioned in this house; you understand. Leave the room."

But as the door closed behind her, he reeled as he arose from the table, and a heavy thud on the floor aroused the servants in the kitchen below, who rushed to the room to find their master speechless, struck down by a fit of paralysis.

CHAPTER VI.

SEVERAL days passed without bringing any clue to the whereabouts of Mortimer.

Maggie, in her lonely room, would pray that he might escape from the hands of justice. She knew from the papers that the firm of Murrell, Murrell and Co. had offered a reward of fifty pounds for his apprehension, and it was with misgivings of what might have happened that she read each day the daily reports.

Could he ever think of her, and the agony of mind she was suffering? But she consoled herself in his silence that it was caused through fear of detection.

She waited patiently, and bared her trial, as Mrs. Coppin thought, bravely. But only until the tiny coffin was taken from her room could she rest in quiet uncertainty. But on the day that her baby boy was lowered into the deep, cold grave she resolved to live but for one purpose—to find out the man on whom alone her love for life rested.

Surely he must think of her, and long for

the solace it was hers to give! It would help him to bear his trouble; and maybe he might yet escape, and she would join him where they could together begin life anew.

Thus ran her thoughts as she, with Mrs. Coppin for her only companion, returned from their mournful journey.

The rain came down in torrents, pattering on the window-panes of the black coach which was bearing them homewards. But Meggie had dried her tears. All her grief for her dead baby she had left behind her as the carriage emerged from the cemetery grounds. Now her thoughts were for the living, and she determined to lose no time in carrying out her resolve.

When they alighted at Rathbone-place she ascended to her rooms, which the little servant had made bright and cheerful for her mistress's return.

The kettle was boiling on the hob, and the tea prepared for her and the landlady.

"Well, dear," said the latter, after they had sat by the fire some time, the tea-tray having been removed, "I am afraid I shall have to leave you, as I shall be having the gentlemen comin' home and wantin' something, you may be sure!"

"Oh! Mrs. Coppin; I am so sorry to have kept you! It is very selfish," Meggie replied.

"Selfish! Not a bit of it," said Mrs. C—; "But what are you going to do?"

Meggie advanced to the window.

"It had left off raining," she said, "and I think I will go out a little, but dear Mrs. Coppin! And she returned to where the latter still sat, and placing her hands on her shoulders, looked down into the kind face uplifted to her own. "Should any inquiries be made, you know how to answer?"

"Leave that to me," said the other, as she gathered the crumbs in her lap, and threw them on the fire. "They won't get much out of Martha Coppins; but now I must be off, so you make your mind easy on that point," saying which she imprinted a motherly kiss on the girl's face, and left the room.

A few moments later and Meggie was in the street, the miserable greasy muddy state of which made walking anything but a pleasant task. The lamps were all alight, and the brilliancy of the shop windows in a great measure counteracted the dreariness of the aspect. She was weighing in her mind the chances of her ever succeeding in finding Mortimer unless he in some way communicated with her, and the different starts she proposed taking in her task became very confusing.

Should she insert an advertisement in one of the daily papers, similar to those she had often read, in what Mortimer called the Agony Column? Then to what address could she have the reply, if any came, directed?

"No," she said, to herself, "that wouldn't do." He would look on it as some trap and leave it unanswered, whereby she would only be throwing away the little money she now so urgently needed. There was but one course open to her, to search the big city through until she found him, she thought despairingly; to find a needle in a big haystack was as easy a task, but if the needle were there, some accident might discover its whereabouts sooner and more easily than one would think. To rest was impossible, to search gave an impetus to her life which inaction would have failed to do.

With no particular object in view, but more from a matter of habit than any other, she found herself in the vicinity of the "Golden Eagle." Its very brilliancy brought the colour to her face, and an angry light to her eyes, as she looked on it as the cause of her trouble. She hated the very ground on which it stood; and as if to avoid coming in contact with an enemy, she was about to turn from the blaze of light to the dimness beyond, when the sound of men's voices arrested her attention.

"Well, say, are you game or not?" said the latter of the two, who had a thick muffler wrapped round his neck, enveloping his chin

and mouth, so as to oblige him to pull it from the latter at each sentence.

His companion was a miserable type of his kind, so thin and his clothes so large that it was a matter of wonder how he could manage to keep them on his attenuated limbs, which appeared to have been shaken into them.

"Twenty pounds, did yer say?" he asked, as his thin fingers passed over his thinner chin, "but he never did me any sort o' 'arm—why should I 'arm him?"

The last sentence seemed to be addressed rather to himself than his companion, as he evidently was weighing in his mind what good that twenty pounds would do for him, and the terms on which he was to become the possessor of it.

"I tell yer, ye're a fool!" said the other, angrily, and in a louder tone. "Ere you are a starvin'; if you don't others will, and there's fifty pounds to be 'arned by a givin' a little information!"

"Then why don't you do it, and bag the lot?" asked the other.

"Beccos—but what's that?" asked the first speaker, as Meggie, in endeavouring to draw nearer unperceived, almost slipped from the step of the doorway where she had hidden, but recovering herself was again invisible to the men, as she strained her ears to catch every word.

"Beccos," repeated the same, removing his muffler lower, "I'm not so desiroos o' hintroducin' myself to the police, as they might be glad to see me. Jack Bourne, he's in this case, and a 'ot 'un he is, and I 'ave private reasons for not wishing to renew my haecquaintance with that gentleman. Now, 'ere's the facts you 'ave to communicate (and he wrote down some particulars for the other's benefit), and when the bird is bagged you 'ave to hand me hover thirty pounds of the fifty you will receive."

"And supposin' I don't?" said the other.

"You know, honesty among—"

But the rest of the sentence was inaudible to Meggie, but it had the desired effect on the thin gentleman, who, without further hesitation, agreed to the proposition, that he was in the first instance to go to Bruton-street, Pimlico, where Mortimer McFarlane had by some accident been discovered to be hiding.

He was to try first which would pay best, by seeing whether the latter valued his liberty at a higher sum than that offered for his capture or not, and to act accordingly.

The rain now began to descend again in torrents, and Meggie was glad of the shelter of the doorway, as she stood there unnoticed in the darkness.

She heard the bigger man tell the other to call at Bruton-street in the morning, as their prey was sure not to be out till dark; and then, with a few more directions which she could not hear, they separated.

Should she go to Bruton-street then, and warn him of his danger? was her first thought, as, stepping from her shelter to beneath the gas lamp, by the aid of its dim light she counted whether she had sufficient to take a cab to her destination. No, she had only a few pence; what should she do? If she went back to Rathbone-place it would make it so late, and she dare not tell, not even good Mrs. Coppin, where she was going; but suddenly a resolve formed itself in her mind. She would ask Mr. Potts to lend her three shillings till the morning; he knew her, and surely would not refuse, and she was soon within the doors of the "Golden Eagle," but the rain had driven so many within that it was impossible for her to see the Plunger; and after waiting for a moment or two she was about to withdraw, but the little man with the blue eyes and white teeth had seen the face with its veil of sorrow, and opening the door, followed her out.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you are in trouble, are you not? Is there anything I can do for you? Come in, and have something."

"No, thank you!" she replied; "you are very kind," and her voice trembled. "I want to take a cab, it is so wet, and I have no money

with me. I was going to ask Mr. Potts to lend me two or three shillings, but he is so busy."

"I will lend it to you," he said; "stop here, I will call a cab," and he put two half-crowns into her hand, leaving her in the porch as he went after one.

The poor wan face had touched him. He felt happy that he could in any way be of assistance to her, and without an inquiry into her trouble, or inquisitiveness as to her movements, he assisted her into the hansom, allowing her to give her own directions.

"I will return the money to-morrow," she said at parting; "thank you so much," and she pressed his hand, looking into his face so gratefully that he felt happy to think he could have been of service to her.

Although quickly conveyed to her destination, it seemed to her an interminable time before they arrived at Bruton-street. She paid the cabman his fare, and hastened down the street to the number she heard mentioned by the two men that evening. The gas was alight all over the house, and the windows of the drawing-room, which opened on to the balcony, were partly open; and as Meggie nervously waited a few moments before lifting the knocker, she heard the tones of a man's voice, as in song they escaped from the open window. She listened; it was one she knew so well, one which recalled to her memories in the past, when the woods had re-echoed those same notes, and she had replied in the verse which was to follow, and now, yes, it was a woman's voice, which in rich contralto notes responded to his, and then in blended melody the last impassioned words were brought together.

Once more Meggie raised her hand to the knocker; a deep crimson flush burnt on each cheek, and she pressed the other to her heart as if to stay its beating, as she rapped at the door.

"Is Mr. —, I mean the gentleman in the drawing-room, is he in?" Meggie asked, as a servant-girl appeared, thinking most likely he would have changed his name.

"What is it, Agnes?" asked the landlady, a big, red-faced woman, who now came forward.

"A young woman to see the gentleman upstairs," responded the girl.

"Who is it you want?" asked the other, as, telling Agnes to go downstairs, she advanced to where Meggie stood, with the hot colour burning her face, and rising to the roots of her dark hair.

"My husband!" she replied, with flashing eyes, "he is in this house!"

"My good girl," replied the landlady, "you have made a mistake. What is his name?"

"Ma—," for a moment forgetting herself, forgetting his danger, she was about to reply; but the next, remembering the cloud hanging over him, she stammered, "I—I don't know."

"Don't know?" responded the landlady. "Don't know your own husband's name? I thought as much; we have none but respectable people here, and the sooner you go the better."

She opened the door as she spoke, and Meggie was again on the step. What could she do? To argue with that woman would have been to betray him; she would wait, perhaps he might come out. The rain had again left off, and she could then warn him; but what did the landlady mean by respectable people only being in her house? Oh, heavens! the horrible thought which took possession of her made her stagger, as she held to the railings for support. There were but few passers-by; the hour was growing late, but still she watched beneath the window. Presently she saw a man approach it, put his hand out to feel if it were raining, and then she heard it closed with a snap, but although she waited no one came from the house.

Suddenly it flashed upon her that the man with the muffler said that Jack Bourne had the case in hand; and Mrs. Coppin had told her, he said, when in need of a friend she was

to go to him, Jack Bourne—her old playmate, her school lover—the man who was to have been her husband. Had she the courage to go to him, whom she had so cruelly deceived? And would he so far forgive the wrong she had done him, as to help her to save him, who was the cause of their separation? Yes, she would put aside all pride; she had but that one hope of saving Mortimer, and such trouble as she had gone through would have broken a prouder spirit than hers.

It was nearly ten o'clock when she reached the station; a man in uniform was standing in the entrance.

"Can I see Mr. Bourne?" she asked; "he is a detective."

"Walk inside," said the man, "and I'll see if he is in."

And he led the way to a door on the right, which he opened, and Meggie found herself in a large room, where were several policemen. There were two large bare, wooden tables, at the back of which similar seats were fixed to the wall; and in front a bright fire was burning in the grate.

On one side was a desk, like a witness-box, in which a policeman (he was an inspector) was standing, entering into a book some articles which had been found on a dirty, slovenly-looking servant girl, whom her master, who was standing by, had given in charge for stealing. The worthless tawdry for which the girl had risked her liberty was identified by the former as his property, and as she was led away to the cells the inspector asked the constable who had entered with Meggie what it was?

"The lady wants Sergeant Bourne, sir," was the reply, and then telling her to wait a moment, as the men were then going on duty, after which he would find him for her, he left her by the fire.

Meggie was amused at the novelty of the scene before her, and as the men filed out one after the other, the policeman told her Sergeant Bourne would be in directly, and a few moments later Jack was with her.

He advanced to where she stood, but concealed the surprise her presence gave him; as he quietly told her to follow him.

"I could not speak to you in the station," he said, as they emerged from the yard; "what is it I can do for you?"

He instinctively knew that it was for help in some form that Meggie had come to him, and as he looked on the poor drawn features, which a few weeks of sorrow had so changed, he could scarcely believe her to be the light-hearted playmate of his youth, the little sweetheart whose image had been so impressed on his heart's tablets that it would never be erased.

"Oh! Jack," she replied, as she burst into tears, "I never thought to have seen you again. It is three years now since—"

Since I was fool enough to let you come to London," he said; "had you remained in our native village until I could have made a home for you here, I think things would have been different; but your stepmother was no friend to you, and I did it for the best; but, never mind, Meggie," he added, with a sigh, "it's no use fretting over spilt milk. I have got over it now, though the blow was a cruel one, on that morning—"

"Oh! don't name it, Jack," she said imploringly, as she clutched his arm, "my sin has indeed found me out. You know now what I have had to suffer! Yes, you know; that it is for his sake that I come to you to-night."

"Oh, yes, I knew that," he said, with an expression on his countenance as though he had just swallowed a dose of castor oil, and then under the shadow of the church, towards which they had wandered, he stopped. "I suppose you don't want me to arrest him. Is that it?" he asked.

"It is," she replied, faintly.

"And what makes you think I won't?" he asked, as he fixed his eyes on the grief-stricken girl. "Do you think the memory of other days will deter me from my duty. When

we—you and I—were children together, when we gathered the heather, and made daisy chains in the sunlight, when we breathed our childish love-tales beneath the blue heavens, from year to year, until, as youth and maid, we still swore to be true to each other; our hearts so interwoven one with the other, as I, fool that I was, thought no power on earth could have torn them asunder. No, Meggie, it is too late."

"Too late!" she cried; "Oh, Jack, you are cruel, cruel."

"Cruel!" he repeated, with a satirical laugh. "Not so cruel, methinks, as the girl who I left in that little village—when I came to London, to join the Metropolitan Police, full of faith and love, that she would remain true to me, as I did to her, little dreaming that a serpent was coiling around her, whilst I was building a nest for my bonnie mate. Then she begged to come to London; maybe, she feared the wiles which were luring her from her rutb, and telling me she was unhappy, I thought she might earn more here than in the quiet home, and bid her come. For what?"

"I have been punished, Jack, in the past, and now my heart is breaking," she sobbed.

"Such hearts as yours are not so easily broken," he said; "and since that day, when my thought my dream was about to be fulfilled, and in the place of my promised bride I received this. On mine it would be deuced hard to make any impression." He opened a piece of paper he had taken from his pocket, which had broken at the folds from long keeping, and read by the light of the street lamp

"Jack, forgive me, I can never see you again, Meggie." "What do you think of it?" he asked, looking back at the girl who was still weeping, as he refolded the old worn letter, and replaced it in his breast-pocket.

"Then you refuse to help me?" she asked. "I don't see how I can," he replied, as after putting aside his own feelings he listened to her story respecting what had that evening occurred. "They know it already up at the station, and I must take him to-morrow morning."

"Oh! Jack," and she raised her tear-stained face to his; "is there no hope, then?"

"I can't see it now," he replied; "but you go home, like a good girl. I will try my best." He took her hands and pressed them kindly within his own. All remembrance of his wrongs seemed to have passed, as the old love came back to the heart, of the hardness of which he had only a few moments past boasted and drawing her towards him, their lips met, the next his dark figure disappeared in the gloom as she bent her steps to Rathbone-place.

CHAPTER VII.

Owing to the hastiness of her flight, Maude was not prepared to cross the Channel on the morning she had become the wife of Gerald Norman, as the latter wished and urged her to do, and he was therefore compelled to take temporary apartments in London, until the necessary preparations were made which he implored her to complete without delay.

They had been married but one short week, in the beginning of their honeymoon; but the cloud which would at times rest on the fair brow of his bride, was but too often reflected on his own. He was fidgety, and restless, refusing to stir out in the day, and declaring the foggy nights would give him his death.

"We will leave by this evening's boat, which starts from St. Katherine's Wharf at eleven o'clock," said Gerald, as his wife poured out the coffee. "Will you be ready?"

"Oh! certainly, dear," she replied, as handing him his cap, she took up the morning paper, before commencing her own breakfast. She cursorily glanced over the police news, and passed over the parliamentary, which for her, had no interest, and was about to turn the page, to see if Gerald was right respecting the time the boats started, when a paragraph

attracted her attention—"Sad Death of Gentleman."—The letters danced before her as she read, her eyes blinded with tears of agony and remorse; and when she came to the end, the paper fell from her grasp, as she buried her face in her hands and sobbed convulsively.

"Mr. Etheridge dead!" exclaimed Gerald, as he picked up the paper and read the paragraph which had so affected his wife.

"Yes, and I have killed him," moaned Maude. "Oh! my father, my father, what shall I do? what shall I do? Gerald, I cannot leave England to-night; I must go to Acacia Villa until after the funeral."

And Gerald read and reread the notice in which it was stated that Mr. Etheridge, late manager of the firm of Murrell, Murrell and Company, which firm he had entered as a lad, had died on the previous day, at his residence Acacia Lodge, Brecknock-road, from an attack of paralysis.

He sat mutely gazing at his wife, as she sobbed out her grief for the loss of her dead parent. His own feelings were as a sealed book, with the exception that he was unable to hide the annoyance he felt.

"Don't cry, Maude," he at last said, as pushing his plate from him, he advanced to where she sat, and tenderly passed his hand over the golden curls.

But as a knock at the door warned Maude rose and walked to the window, to avoid the inquisitive gaze of the servant who now entered.

"Please sir, a gentleman wants to see you," said the latter, addressing Gerald.

"What is his name?" he asked.

"He didn't give no name, sir, as he said you knew him," was the reply.

"No, I thought it unnecessary to do so," said the visitor, as, following on the girl's footsteps, he entered the room and closed the door after him.

And Gerald turned, his face changed to a livid whiteness, his eyes burning with rage and fear, as they fell on the man before him.

"At last," said the latter; "Mortimer McFarlane, we meet face to face."

"Mortimer McFarlane!" exclaimed Maude, as she turned her fearful face to where the men stood, and then appealing to her husband, "Gerald," she said, "what does it mean?"

"It means, madam," replied the other, as Gerald, unable to answer, stood with bowed head before her, "that I am here to arrest Mortimer McFarlane, alias Gerald Norman, on a charge of forgery. He knows me very well; this is not the first time he and Sergeant Bourne have met. Who is this lady?" he continued, addressing the guilty man.

For a moment Mortimer regained his manliness; he brushed the curls from his brow, and looking Jack Bourne in the face as he folded his arms over his breast, in a tone of defiance he replied, "She is my wife."

"Your wife!" exclaimed Jack, "then what of Meggie O'Shea? Do you mean, do you dare to tell me that you dared to put another woman in the place she should have filled, and to leave her, as I found her—twas but a few mornings back, lying as it were dead, with her lifeless babe in her arms? Mortimer McFarlane, think not that I will harm you," he continued, as the latter shrank back as though he feared the other's rage. "Coward, and she asked me to save you. It was at her request, with the tears streaming down her sweet face, that I came here to forget my duty by placing you in safety."

"Then your name is not Gerald Norman?" said Maude. "You have deceived me also, you are Mortimer McFarlane, the son of my father's oldest and dearest friend."

"Yes, madam," said Jack, as notwithstanding his resolve to be a friend to Mortimer, for Meggie's sake, he felt some satisfaction in seeing the mesh woven and entangled around his enemy. "That's right; and now it is my duty to take him on this little matter," and he

showed Maude the warrant he held for his arrest.

"Never!" exclaimed Mortimer; "Jack Bourne, beware. Lay a finger on me, and you are a dead man. Maude, move aside," and quickly drawing a revolver from his pocket, he gently put her from him, as he presented it at the detective.

The latter never winced beneath his look—a look in which the worst passions were revealed,—but with a sudden spring seized the weapon from his grasp, when a loud report was heard, and both men fell.

Maude's screams resounded through the house, and soon the room was filled. But Jack had recovered his feet; he was uninjured, whilst the ball which was to have been his messenger of death had lodged in the breast of his adversary. Maude had thrown herself on her knees beside the prostrate man, vainly endeavouring to staunch the blood as it flowed from his wound; whilst Jack looked on his fallen foe, as if he would have given his life rather than have caused his death.

"Maude, dear," said Mortimer faintly, "bend low, kiss me, darling, and tell me you forgive me. I am going, it will save a lot of trouble, and no one but the lawyers will regret it. But, believe me," he continued between each gasp, "I loved you truly, and I hoped it would have come all right in the end; but Heaven was too powerful for me, and it is better it should be as it is." Then holding out his hand to the detective, "Good-bye, old fellow," he said; "don't tell her what a scoundrel I was, but tell her that I left her to you, and may Heaven bless you both."

His breathing came faint and more faint, as Maude still knelt beside him, one hand clasped in his, as with the other she raised his head to her bosom.

"Oh! Mortimer, my darling, my darling!" she cried, as the tears streamed down her beautiful face.

"Don't call me Mortimer," he said, "call me Gerald; I was ever Gerald to you Maude, let me be Gerald to the end."

The end! for which there was so little time to wait, a few more struggles for the breath, so soon to cease for ever, one last effort to look into those eyes which were looking down on him, and Mortimer McFarlane had passed away.

None could look upon that scene unmoved; even Jack Bourne, the man he had so deeply wronged, had a suspicious moisture around his eyes to which he applied the back of his hand, as he took the dead man from the grasp of Maude, who appeared stunned by the sudden troubles, which would have overwhelmed a stronger mind than hers.

All grief and thought for the father lying dead in the home where she had left him without a word of farewell seemed to be swallowed up in the agony she now felt, as she saw them lift the lifeless body of Gerald, her own, her darling, the husband of a week; and as they laid him on the velvet couch she again threw herself on her knees, and wept such scalding tears of agony as never before had bedewed her lovely face.

"Let her cry," said Jack, as the womanfolk endeavoured to console her, "It will do her good, poor thing."

A sound of men's voices below aroused her as she arose from her kneeling posture. Could there be more trouble in store for her, she thought, as like a hunted stag at bay, she turned as a fresh comer entered the room.

It was the little, thin individual, between whom and The Muffler Meggie had heard the conversation on the previous evening.

"What did it all mean?" he asked, but before a reply could be given Jack Bourne's keen eye had taken in the reason of his visit, knowing from Meggie's description who he was and the errand on which he came, and approaching him, said, "It means you are too late."

"Too late!" exclaimed the other, not yet understanding the situation; "has he escaped?"

"He has escaped," was the solemn reply, as Jack led him so that he could have a view of the lifeless body. "He is dead and you have lost fifty pounds."

Surprise, horror, more than disappointment, was depicted on the thin man's countenance, as shuffling from the room unable to fulfil the task he was never very anxious to perform, he was heard to say, "Poor fellow! Well, he never 'armed me, I shouldn't 'a liked to 'ave injured him."

AFTER ALL.

Ten years have passed since that morning on which Mortimer McFarlane was called to a higher tribunal than that to which, had his life not paid the penalty, he would have been called on earth.

For weeks after the tragic occurrence Maude was laid on a bed of sickness, round which flitted a young girl like a ministering angel, ever and anon moistening the feverish lips, and placing cool rags on the burning, restless head, whilst Jack Bourne—for it was he who had brought her there—would call almost daily, to hear how the patient was progressing, or, rather, to inquire after the health of the young nurse. She was his legacy, he said, and he had a legal right to her; and six months after, when Maude was restored to health, when the roses once more bloomed on her pale cheek, she told Jack to take the treasure he had brought her in her trouble. And Jack did.

Ten years since, and still Maude remains a widow. When sorting some letters of her father's on her recovery, she came across the history of the mother she had never known, but of whom she had heard. She sees no one now but Meggie and her little ones, whilst with the former, the troubles of her youth seemed to have enhanced her charms. She never knows now the weary watchings, and the dread uncertainty of former days. Jack is, as ever, the same true, noble-hearted lover and husband combined in one, and she looks for his coming with ever a bright smile of welcome on her face, when he will, with his arm around her waist, whilst his youthful son clings to his knees, forgive his dead enemy, and bless his memory for the legacy he bequeathed him; whilst for one more old friend there is ever a welcome to their happy home—Mrs. Coppin.

[THE END.]

No news has yet been obtained of the magic bracelet lost by the Princess Helen Rhandar Singh, who was the fortune-telling gipsy at the late Peasant Festival. This bracelet of Princess Helen's had been given to her father by the King of Oudh, with the understanding that if it was lost at any time the luck of the family would change. It consisted of a gold snake, set with sapphires arranged in nines, which, being uncut, did not look valuable. The Princess had been studying palmistry for some months before the fête, which resulted in her earning £25 for the charity by telling fortunes. People who do not know the Princess personally are quite well acquainted with her face, as she sat for Mr. Edwin Long for her head in his latter pictures.—*Society*.

POPPING THE QUESTION.

In the East they have a beautiful custom of talking in flowers. A young man, who had been playing the devoted admirer for some time, but had never summoned sufficient courage to ask the all-important question, had been reading of this custom and determined to employ it in his own behalf. He quickly procured and sent to the object of his hopes a garland, in which the blossoms were arranged to spell the laconic query:

"Mine—When?"

The young lady, who had resorted in vain to various means to bring him to the point, promptly responded with a chaplet, in which was deftly woven the concise reply:

"Thine—now."

The bargain thus tersely made was soon consummated, and we have never heard that either of the contracting parties has had cause to regret it.

TRUE LOVE'S VERDICT.

"If I only knew how to decide! Was there ever a woman in such a quandary before? Here are the two men whose friendship I prize above the rest of the world, both asking me to marry them! And the worst of it is, I actually do not know which I prefer!"

And Barbara Redfern turned a pair of exceedingly puzzled eyes upon her mother, who, in the bay-window, was glancing over the morning papers. She turned quickly, and an expression of alarm leaped into her face.

"Barbara!"

"The tone was reproachful as well as reproving. The petted beauty laughed gaily, as she went on tying up the great bunches of roses and lilies which were lying before her upon a round table.

"It is true—'tis pity; and pity 'tis,' 'tis true," she quoted, laughingly; "for, mamma, Lionel and Harry Spencer are cousins, you know, and I have been the recipient of their devoted attentions ever since my final return from school. They have asked me the momentous question almost simultaneously, and neither is answered. Both are young, rich, and handsome; it is difficult to give either the preference. Sometimes I fancy I like Harry the best; then, just as I have made up my mind accordingly, something occurs which causes me to veer round like the wind, and I become dead certain that there is nobody like Lionel. Suppose I toss up a penny, and decide the matter?"

"Barbara Redfern!"

"Oh, don't get tragic, mamma. You know that I am really troubled in regard to the matter. You know also that as I cannot become the wife of both, one is bound to be disappointed; and the vexed question is, which one shall it be?"

"But surely, my dear," expostulated Mrs. Redfern, with concern, "you must know your own heart, and for which of the two you feel even a slight preference. No?" (as Barbara shook her head doubtfully). "Well, then, my advice is to postpone a decision in either case for the present, and something may turn up to show you your own heart. By the way" (after a little pause), "here is a letter that I have just received. From whom do you think, Barbara, but Edwin Graham, the young artist who left here for Italy two years ago. Very talented—a genius some thought—but very, horribly poor. You recollect him Barbara?"

Every vestige of colour had died out of Barbara Redfern's face; her eyes were dilated, and her whole appearance was like one suddenly overcome by some strong emotion.

But she nodded her head simply, and went on tying up her flowers. What was this impetuous artist to her, Barbara Redfern, the petted beauty and heiress?

Her short upper lip curled scornfully at some stray thought passing through her brain. She gathered up her bouquets, all prepared for their dainty vases, and left the room. On the threshold she paused.

"I will read the young man's letter, mamma, if you wish," she said, quietly. "Give it to me."

Mrs. Redfern laid the letter in the one disengaged hand, and the girl disappeared.

Having disposed of her flowers she ran upstairs to her own room, and closing and locking the door upon all intruders, threw herself into an easy-chair, and began to read the letter.

A rare production; an original mixture of prose and poetry—a mingling of lights and shadows—such as only a real artist can portray.

Such a letter as one is not fated to receive twice in a life-time.

There is so much character in some letters; one can read the writer's inmost heart with greater ease and accuracy than would be gained

by months of intercourse in fashionable society, where rain taught out conventionalities, and that "Small—small—imperfectible small talk!"

But, though the letter was simply charming, it was a little odd to see (had any one been there to see) what Barbara Redfern did after she had read it. She perused it eagerly, devoutly, then she bent her handsome head and pressed the immense paper to her lips.

Odd, wasn't it? And yet she had been heard to say that she disliked artists, or, at least, the non-successful, and had no patience with their vagaries. And I venture to affirm that had any one spoken the name of Edwin in her presence, she would have listened with a palpable sneer. For everybody knew that the two had quarrelled horribly.

Yet there—how inexplicable indeed is the nature of woman!—she sat in her own chamber kissing his letter, and—actually shedding tears!

There was one sentence which she read and re-read. It was to the effect that, having succeeded beyond his expectations, he had decided to come home for a brief vacation, and expressed a courteous wish that he might soon meet again his old-time friend, Mrs. Redfern.

Barbara folded the letter and placed it in her own writing-desk. Then she arose and bathed her face and eyes in rose-water.

"Coming home!" she sighed, softly, stealing a glance at her pale face in the large mirror. "Well, soon meet, then. And when last we met I—I insulted him by my silly pride. He said then that when we should meet again I would be glad to meet him, and ready to retract all that I had said which had wounded him so. Ah, well, to one thing I have made up my mind!"

She seated herself at the desk, and wrote two letters, both refusals of the respective offers of marriage of the two cousins.

She breathed freely when they were sealed and addressed. Then a sudden impulse seized her, and she hastily scrawled upon a sheet of paper, these words:—

"DEAR EDWIN,—I am glad that you are coming home, and I rejoice in your success. In many respects I am changed; for my foolish pride of wealth and position, and my horror of poverty, are all vanished, and I think you will not find reason to quarrel with me again."

"B. R."

When Mrs. Redfern posted her answer to the young artist's letter, this little note went enclosed. The words that Barbara had written would, she well knew, be perfectly plain to Edwin Graham; and she was content to bide her time until his return.

The very next mail brought a letter for Barbara from the artist, asking her to be his wife.

She carried it straight to her mother, and told her that she had answered the other proposals already, for her heart had spoken, and she knew at last that her affection for old school-mates had not been love in either case, but that from first to last her heart had belonged to Edwin Graham.

To her surprise, her mother gave hearty consent to the engagement.

And so the troublesome question was settled, and Barbara Redfern's fate was sealed.

She was married several days, however, before she made the discovery that her husband, although only a rising young artist, was a very wealthy man.

And she discovered at the same time the whole truth, that her mother, having been desirous from first to last that Barbara should marry Edwin Graham, had arranged all, and had engineered the whole affair to her own satisfaction, and that of all parties concerned, except the two cousins.

And to this day they persist in stigmatizing Miss Redfern as a coquette and a heartless flirt. But Barbara answers, sardonically, that she might have married either and been unhappy for ever, had not true love intervened.

M. G.

FACETIÆ.

METALLURGISTS SHOULD NOTE THIS.—Iron is decidedly the most ill-tempered of metals, for it is very often a ralling.

FOR BACHMANS.—"When does a man become a seamstress?"—"When he hems and haws."—"No."—"When he threadsthis way."—"No."—"When he rips and tears."—"No."—"Give it up."—"Never, if he can help it."

MISTRESS (horrified): "Good gracious, Bridget, have you been using one of my stockings to strain the coffee through?"—Bridget (apologetically): "Yis, mam; but sure I didn't take a clane one!"

"You say your brother is younger than you, yet he looks much older."—"Yes, he has seen a great deal of trouble; but I never married."

MAGISTRATE: What sort of man, now, was it whom you saw commit the assault?—Constable: Shure, yer honour, he was small, insignificant creatur—about your own size, yer honour!

"Oh dear!" sighed Mrs. B., with toothache. "Why can't people be born without teeth?"—"If you reflect a moment, my dear," replied Mr. B., "you will be convinced that such is the fact."

A PAINTER, who had turned physician, was asked why he had quitted his profession.—"Because," replied he, "my former exhibited my mistakes in too glaring a manner; therefore I have chosen one in which they will be buried."

SOMEbody asked Victor Hugo if he could write English poetry.—"Certainly," he replied, and forthwith delivered himself of the following:—"Pour chasser le spleen J'entr'ai dans un inn O, mais je bus le gin God save the Queen!"

A SPORTSMAN who, during the shooting season, had gone to pass a week with a friend in the country, on the strength of a general invitation, soon found, by a gentle hint, that he would have done better to wait for a special one.—"I saw some beautiful scenery," was the visitor's first remark, "as I came to-day by the upper road?"—"You will see still finer," was the reply, "as you go back to-morrow by the lower one!"

CONGRATULATIONS.—"When I left London six years ago, that mournful failure had already been out four or five seasons, and made dead sets for most of the rich fellows in society. Looks as though she'd take anything now."—"Which one is that?"—"The floppy specimen behind you. Do you know her?"—"Yes. We are to be married in January."

THE ATTEMPT THAT AFFLICTED MOLLY.—A young lady, having "set her cap" for a rather large specimen of the opposite sex, and having failed to win him, was telling her sorrow to a couple of her confidants, when one of them confronted her with these words:—"Never mind, Molly; there are no good fish in the sea as ever were caught."—"Mollie knows that," replied her little brother; "but she wants a whale!"

"Don't you think she's pretty?" said the fond mother to the father, as she stroked the baby's tiffen hair.—The father was in a sulking mood—something bad disagreed with him—and he replied, somewhat curtly: "Oh, all babies are about alike. They look like little monkeys."—"Just then a neighbour entered, and, taking the baby in her lap, said: "Mercy on us! how like its father that child is!"

BASSONPIERRE one day accused Louis XIII. and the Court by telling them how, when serving in the capacity of Ambassador of Spain, he first entered Madrid. "I was mounted on the very smallest mule in the world."—"Ah!" interrupted the joke-loving king, "it must indeed have been an amusing sight to have seen the biggest ass in the place mounted on so small a quadruped."—"With a profound obeisance, came the quiet rejoinder: "I was your Majesty's representative."

It is a Mississippi man who puts it thus:—"At the earnest solicitation of those to whom I owe money, I have consented to become a candidate for the county treasurer'ship."

ONE day, on the steps of a club, the late H. S. Leigh was asked if there was inside "a man with one eye named Walker."—"Let's see, what's the name of his other eye?" Leigh inquired.

COURT (to prosecutor): "Then you recognise this handkerchief as the one which was stolen from you?"—Prosecutor: "Yes, your honour." Court: "And yet it isn't the only handkerchief of the sort in the world. See, this one I have in my pocket is exactly like it."—Prosecutor: "Very likely, your honour; I had two stolen."

NOR SHARP.—It was a temperance meeting, and the speaker, with a smile of modesty, began:—"Ladies and gentlemen, were I to talk lengthily upon this subject I would no doubt bore you." In a moment, however, a voice from the gallery was heard to retort: "No fear, mister, you're not sharp enough for that."

HIS CHICKENS.—"Mr. Crimsonbeak, will you show me your chickens if I come down to your house some day?" asked little Johnny Yeast of that gentleman, the other evening, when he and his wife were calling at the Yeast residence. "Why, Johnny, I don't keep chickens," replied Mr. Crimsonbeak, gently patting the boy on the head; "what made you think I did?" "Why, whenever I hear mamma mention your name, she always calls you the henpecked husband; but I can't see how you can be henpecked if you don't keep any chickens." Johnny suddenly vanished from the room, and took the shortest road to his bedroom.

BULL'S EYES.

There are people whose only safety consists in being eminently precise; when such people stumble, they are almost sure to fall their whole length.

Gravity is commonly the most suitable thing for those to have, who have the most of it.

It is but a step from fear to despair, and it is an ignominious one to take.

An honest fanatic is far more dangerous than a vicious, or mad one; honesty never loses all its power.

If you wish to escape notice follow the fashions, this is the very best thing that can be said of them.

There are people of such flippant natures, that if it wasn't for their faults, they wouldn't have any noticeable characters at all.

No man's conscience ever flattered him.

Kontentment is oft a negative virtue. I have often seen people kontented with what they ought to be ashamed of.

Knowledge is valuable, but it is better to have less of it, than so much that we want prove.

It is so easy to preach morality, and seems to be so pleasant too, that I am surprised that so few find time to practise it.

Charity is the best of all investments, the interest is paid here, and the principal in Heaven.

Levity is a stiff pashun, but it can live longer on almost any diet, than it can on duty alone.

As long as mankind last living will last, and not only hold its own, but probably increase.

All true pedigree are derived from virtue, and whenever the son inherits the virtue of the father, he has got his pedigree good and strong.

Bigotry is the worst form of religion, as superstition is the worst form of ignorance.

Cunning is not necessarily a vice, and never is a virtue. Cunning, at best, is but the shrewdness of a weak mind. No wise man ever stoops to cunning.

Vanity is one of the best allies that charity has.

I can judge a man's karakter by hearing his opinyun of others better than any other way.

JOHN BILLING

SOCIETY.

THE scene at the Children's Ball, given by the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House to celebrate their wedding-day, was animated in the extreme. The rooms were filled by ten o'clock, and their Royal Highnesses exerted themselves to the utmost for the enjoyment of the young people, taking part in all the dancing, which went on right merrily until nearly four o'clock. The Duchess of Edinburgh, with two of her children, was present. Princess Beatrice arrived from Windsor Castle in the afternoon, with the young daughters of Prince and Princess Christian, to attend the ball.

The Princess of Wales wore light blue; the three Princesses of Wales were in white dresses, trimmed with white silk, the under bodices of which were made low, with white Indian muslin high to the throat over the low bodices. Princess Louise wore her hair dressed in the prevailing mode; but her sisters had theirs still in childish fashion. The Duchess of Sutherland wore a dress of cream-white muscade, and Lady Alexandra Gower was in white. The Countess of Rosslyn's eldest daughter looked remarkably well in pale straw colour; and Lady Sybil Erskine-St. Clair wore a charming dress of white mousseline-de-soi trimmed with white satin ribbons and lace.

Lady Borthwick's dress of ivory-white lace was remarkably pretty, and her two children were much admired—Master Oliver Borthwick in a page's costume, with knee-breeches and silk stockings, all made in white terry velvet; white satin shoes, and large shoe buckles; Miss Borthwick in white cashmere, trimmed with lace. Though white was most generally chosen for the children's costumes, there were several in brighter colours.

THE Scottish Pipers' Ball at Edinburgh was a thoroughly genuine success. The company numbered three hundred, and the ladies' dresses were varied and picturesque, a noticeable feature being the prevalence of heather and other badges of the Scottish clans, and rosettes, favours, and ribbons of the various tartans; the adopted tartan of the society—Hunting Stuart—being perhaps predominant. Amongst the gentlemen, naval and military uniforms mustered in force, while the Highland dress in all its picturesque forms, and in the tartans of most of the clans, was very largely represented, the ordinary evening dress of gentlemen being scarcely noticed amid the crowd of tartans.

THE recent wedding of Miss Laura Wood, daughter of General Wood, of Littleton, and Mr. H. C. J. Bunbury, eldest son of the late Colonel Bunbury, was an extremely stylish one. The bride was attired with great simplicity in a dress of ivory satin, the bodice being trimmed with Meublan lace, the gift of her aunt, Mrs. Fitz-Roy; a very narrow wreath of orange blossoms and tulle veil. She wore no ornaments. The costumes of the seven bridesmaids were much admired. They were composed of pale yellow grenadine, mixed with nun's veiling and satin, bordered with brown marabout, of which soft feathers their ruffa and toques were made, with the addition of pale yellow aigrettes. Each wore a gold bee pin brooch, set with a pearl, the bridegroom's gift. The bride's travelling dress was of brown ottoman silk and velvet, with bonnet and muff to match.

MAJOR the Hon. Hugh Gough's marriage, on the 14th March, with Miss Hilda Moffatt, youngest daughter of the late Mr. G. Moffatt, M.P., was one of the events of the earlier part of the season. The bride wore white broché velvet over a white satin petticoat covered with flounces of old Brussels point lace, sprays of real orange flowers in her hair being covered by a tulle veil, fastened with diamonds, her other ornaments including a string of pearls and a diamond pendant, the gift of the bridegroom.

STATISTICS.

DIVORCE.—A French statistician has just compiled some very curious tables relating to the comparative numbers of divorces and judicial separations in different countries. By these it appears that a bad prominence is attained by Denmark, Switzerland, and the United States, whereas a good mark must be given to Scotland, Russia, Finland, and Italy. In the latter countries the proportion is only from one to five in every 1,000 marriages, whereas in the former it amounts to from 11 to 23. In our own divorce court we see at least as many petitions presented by men as by women, but on the Continent the balance must be very one-sided, for, when the general statistics come to be analyzed, it is found that nine successful petitions are preferred by wives against one preferred by the husband. Conjugal catastrophes of this kind are more common in Protestant than in Roman Catholic countries. In Switzerland, where the records of such misadventures are more strictly kept than elsewhere, it is found that the relative proportion is 283 among Protestants against 73 among Roman Catholics. But in the case of mixed marriages between persons of different religions, the proportion rises to more than 600 out of every 100,000 marriages.

GEMS.

EVERYWHERE and always a man's worth must be gauged to some extent, though only in part, by his domesticity.

THE greatest friend of truth is time, her greatest enemy is prejudice, and her constant companion is humility.

I PITY the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, 'tis all barren—and so it is, and so is all the world to him who will not cultivate the fruitless offices.

LAZINESS grows on people; it begins in cobwebs and ends in iron chains. The more business a man has to do the more he is able to accomplish, for he learns to economise his strength.

REAL merit of any kind cannot be concealed; it will be discovered, and nothing can depreciate it but a man's showing it himself. It may not always be rewarded as it ought; but it will always be known.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

ROAST GOOSE.—Stuff the goose with a potato dressing made in the following manner: Six potatoes, boiled, pared, and mashed fine and light; one tablespoonful of salt; one teaspoonful of pepper; one spoonful of sage; two tablespoonfuls of onion juice, two of butter. Truss and dredge well with salt, pepper, and flour. Roast before the fire (if weighing eight pounds) one hour and a half; in the oven one hour and a quarter. Make gravy the same as for turkey. No butter is required for goose, it is so fat. Serve with apple sauce.

BROILED COLD CHICKEN.—Split the chicken down the back, have an egg beaten, dip the chicken into it, and then into some nicely-seasoned breadcrumb. Broil over a clear gentle fire. The neck, feet, and gizzard may be boiled down to make a gravy; and the liver, after having simmered five or ten minutes, may be taken out, mashed, and used to thicken the gravy. Serve hot.

ANCHOVY TOAST.—Bone, clean, and wash a number of anchovies, make some slices of toast, butter them on one side very plentifully, and cut them in finger-shaped pieces. Lay one or two slices of anchovy on each piece, throw a dash of pepper and the least bit of cayenne on them, and put them in the oven just long enough to get thoroughly hot, and serve immediately.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A MONKEY signalman manages the railway traffic at Uitenhage, South Africa, so we learn from *The Colonist*. The human signalman belonging to the post lost both his legs in a recent railway accident, and so has trained a baboon to discharge his duties. Jacko pushes his master about on a trolley, and under his direction works the lever to set the signals, with a most ludicrous imitation of humanity. He puts down the lever, looks round to see that the correct signal is up, and then gravely watches the approaching train, his master being at hand meanwhile to correct any mistake.

TACT.—How much trouble mothers, young and old, would save themselves by a little continuous nursery diplomacy—in other words, tact! It is so much better to secure voluntary discipline than to multiply exacting rules. A reasonable being knows that neglect of right-doing brings suffering to somebody; and how much more useful is it to develop "reason" in a child's mind than sullen obedience! A very successful trainer of her children never gave any utterance beforehand of what a punishment was to be for shortcoming. She was accustomed to say to her children, "Don't you think you had better do thus or so before such a time?" A sort of confidential leading this, to the right view of things, which come before obedience proper, and in most cases dispenses with it.

SEALSKIN CLOAKS.—In some large cities seal-skin cloaks are hired by the season. This new system is injuring the fur trade, and it would not be surprising if some of the fur dealers were obliged to enter another branch of trade. A new cloak will bring £10 for a season of three months; the next season it will let for about the same; but after the second season its hire is reduced £2 a year, and it is finally sold for about £10. It is much cheaper in the long run to hire a cloak than to buy one, as after two seasons only £20 has been expended; whereas, if it had been bought, a much larger sum would have been spent. By hiring a cloak ladies can have a change every season, and run no risk of having their furs moth-eaten in the summer.

NOVEL COOKERY.—Some people in Canada are reported to have invented a machine for cooking by electricity. It consists of a saucepan or hot plate so isolated by non-conductors that the bottom forms a positive pole of a current. The other pole is attached to a movable point, which travels over the under surface of the pan in circles sufficiently quick not to burn a hole through. Some cakes were cooked in the apparatus and eaten by the inventor and his family, who are believed to be the first members of the human race who have eaten food cooked by the electric spark. One lady declared she tasted the flavour of electricity "quite strong."

PLEASANT PEOPLE.—Companionable people are those who have a knack of making light of their tribulations and vexations, and a habit of putting them out of sight; who do not entertain their acquaintances with the recital of a leaky pipe, a bad bassing, the children's measles, the shortcomings of the servants; who know how to keep their melancholy, if they have any, out of the conversation; whose nerves do not furnish them with material for a morning sail; who are not always on the lookout for a draught, or a change of weather, or a sigh; who do not lament their poverty aloud, and make us feel responsible for it and uncomfortable amidst our plenty. The companionable people never seek to make us dissatisfied with ourselves or our belongings; they talk about the things we like to hear and are silent upon the subjects on which we disagree; they do not differ from us for the sake of differing, and do not announce their opinions as if there were no appeal therefrom.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BLUE RIBBON.—1. Fairly good writing 2. Upwards of fifty means more than fifty.

R. W.—Hair auburn. Handwriting wants considerable practice.

B. M. G.—Stamping receipts for money is a comparatively modern device for increasing the taxes, dating as it does only from 1783.

TROUBLED.—The marriage is perfectly legal. There should be little or no difficulty in husband and wife discovering each other's whereabouts.

A LONDON READER.—Wash it very carefully in tepid water into which a little soap has been dissolved; dry carefully, and polish with a wash-leather.

S. J. W.—He would have to be articled to a solicitor in practice, and pass three examinations before being admitted.

R. H. (Liverpool).—A cheap manual of etiquette on the subject mentioned can be obtained from any bookseller.

N. R. S.—1. The 3rd November, 1844, came on a Sunday. 2. Lizzie means the "Oath of the Lord," Ethel, "noble;" Grace, "favour;" Agnes, "a lamb." 3. Use the tweezers; depilatories are not to be recommended.

TEACHER.—The Sunday School Union was founded in 1802, but Sunday schools themselves as an institution owe their existence to Robert Bakke of Gloucester, who began to organise them in 1781, though it is stated that a Sunday-school existed at Caterick in Yorkshire in 1763.

D. W. F.—1. The organ at the Albert Hall is said to be the largest in the world. 2. Mary means "bitter." 3. If you love him accept him; he seems to be a worthy young fellow, and devoted to you. Herriek's advice to gather "rosebuds while you may" is as applicable nowadays as when he wrote it.

R. L. S.—The derivation of the word tobacco is variously given. Some say it is from Tobacco, a province of Yutacan, New Spain, others from the Island of Tobago, one of the Caribbees, others from Tobacco in the Gulf of Florida. The botanical name is *Nicotiana tabacum*.

CORALIE.—You must have lived in great seclusion, or else among a singular class of young people, never to have got an idea of what flirting is. To flirt is to play at courting, and to make a person believe that you are in earnest about it when you are not. A "flirt" is one who practices such deceit, and tries to win hearts simply for pastime.

G. P. R.—Brobdignag is an imaginary country mentioned by Gulliver in his "Travels." The inhabitants were enormous giants, being, according to his description, as tall as an ordinary church-steeple, with all the surrounding in proportion.

S. M.—"El Dorado" is a Spanish term meaning the "golden land." The name was first given by a Spanish navigator, in 1531, to a country which he pretended to have discovered in the interior of South America, between the Orinoco and Amazon Rivers. The term has since been applied to various regions in which gold has been found.

A CONSTANT READER (Ulverston).—Please in future adopt a more distinctive title. The young man certainly not acted well to you, but as you love him so dearly take an opportunity to see him and ask him why he does not write or call upon you. 2. Try a mixture of cantharides and sweet oil for the hair; your chemist will tell you the proportions. 3. A little above the average, but by no means too tall. The celebrated statue known as the Medici Venus is 5 ft. 1 in.

JAMES J. (Wolverhampton).—1. Decidedly too early; four years later would be about the right age. 2. Certainly not. 3. There is no fixed period, but a man ought not as a rule to think of marriage much before he is five-and-twenty. 4. The wedding ring finger for a lady is the third finger of the left hand. 5. Drinking porter has no particular influence in making a person stout. Stoutness is, to a great extent, constitutional, and certainly not a thing to be desired. Aim at being healthy in mind and body.

BELLA.—You are placed in an awkward position, and of the two evils the least would be to give the young man up altogether. He is engaged to your sister, and therefore you are in duty bound to have nothing to say to him, especially on the sly. If he were really a manly young fellow he would go straight to your sister, explain all the circumstances, and tell her frankly how matters stand. To go on in your present course can only mean the greatest unhappiness for all parties.

F. W. M.—The study of logic is doubtless a fine exercise for the mind, enabling a person who has thoroughly mastered its principles to reason correctly and to measure his assertions, and to avoid rashness in argument, but a man may have a thoroughly logical mind without having even heard of the science. Like most abstruse subjects, it must be looked upon as a severe form of mental discipline, of great value to clergymen, doctors, lawyers, and, indeed, indirectly to men of business, especially those who have extensive operations to transact, as it teaches the great value of method in all things.

CITIZEN LESLIE.—The Metropolitan Railway was opened on the 10th January, 1863.

ROVER.—Put a piece of brimstone in the dog's water, and keep him in a warm place.

L. B. S.—1. If the debt has been owing for only three years it is recoverable. 2. An I.O.U. does not require a stamp.

B. C. D.—Many scientific men attribute the extraordinary sunsets and sunrises of the past winter to the presence of volcanic dust in the air.

C. R. S.—The following is claimed to be a thoroughly good baking powder. Take of powdered cream of tartar, 30 ozs.; bicarbonate of soda, 15 ozs.; flour, 5 ozs.; let all be thoroughly well dried; mix thoroughly, and keep in a dry place.

LOYAL A LA MORT.—The title "your Majesty," as applied to a monarch, was first given to the emperors of ancient Germany. The first king to whom it was applied was Louis XI. of France. Francis I. is stated to have addressed Henry VIII. by it at their interview on the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." James I. added the words "sacred" or "most excellent," now in use.

"THE HEART GOES WITH THE HAND!"

"I cannot yield in this, father!"

The voice was firm, but low;

"Though to obey thee night and day

No child could further go;

With duty's summons well-content;

But seek not to command

That I without my heart's consent

Should give this girlish hand!

"You say this suitor's rich, father,

And that he loves me much;

But what to me is that, since he

Hath failed my heart to touch?

You say that Farmer Phil, of whom

I'm fond, is poor at best;

But can that in my heart make room

For some unwelcome guest?

"No, no! A woman's hand, father,

Her own is to confer—

All gifts before, than birthright more,

By Heaven consigned to her;

And pitiful were she, a slave

Unworthy this free land,

To plight her sacred life-troth, save

The heart went with the hand!

"And as for Farmer Phil, father—

Poor Phil! but he obeyed,

If lack of gains his crime remains,

And I will hide a maid;

Thine age to bless thy home to cheer,

Nor ask for wifehood's crown,

But do not, I entreat— But here

The sire's resolve broke down.

"My child!" he sobbed, and clasped her form;

"Full well thou plead'st the choice,

With the tremors soft I marked so oft

In thy dead mother's voice.

Call Phil! I doubt not we'll agree,

And henceforth, fall or stand,

Be sure, my child, that I shall see

The heart goes with the hand!"

N. U.

B. W.—1. "I must go," is the proper mode of expression. 2. Variscite is an apple-green, translucent mineral, of a weak, greasy lustre, and composed of alumina, phosphoric acid and water. 3. The stone named, to which no reference is made in books of reference, is perhaps a species of agate known to lapidaries as "tiger-eye."

LIDA.—It would not help to develop your ability to write compositions at all, if we should send you such a piece as you ask us for. Anything that you write yourself will be better for you than the best article which anybody could send you. Do your best; that is all that your teacher expects of you. We hope you will be able to write something that will be creditable to a little girl only twelve years' old.

C. W. G.—It is very probable that comets have struck the earth in the past, or at least enveloped it with the matter composing the tails. In 1873 Schiaparelli received the gold medal of the London Astronomical Society for the discovery that comets have sometimes a connection with the meteoric showers which have attracted so much attention in our own time. 2. The comet of 1843 has not been identified with Newton's comet of 1680. 3. Any bookseller can get you a collection of Latin hymns containing the *Dies Irae*.

C. R. A.—It is not at all uncommon to find one limb longer than the other in human beings. Indeed perfect symmetry is the exception. It has recently been recorded that out of seventy well-authenticated skeletons examined the lower limbs were equal in length in only seven instances, the right limb being longer in twenty-five and the left limb in thirty-eight cases. It is claimed that this will have the effect, where persons walked without knowing the direction from their surroundings, of making their step longer with one limb than the other, and thus cause them to travel in a circle, as people so frequently do when they get lost. In most of the skeletons above referred to the right arm was longer than the left.

L. V. S.—A minor cannot make a will.

ESTHER R.—The colour of the Red Sea is due to marine plants.

GOVERNMENTAL.—The State paper office was founded in 1578.

R. D.—Five-pound bank-notes were first issued on the 12th April, 1793.

ELISE.—It is a good rule to repeat nothing you hear about the personal character of others.

A. M.—The oldest Royal Academician is Mr. J. R. Herbert, who was elected in 1846.

D. F.—Write to the Secretary of the Surgical Aid Society, Salisbury-square, Fleet-street, London.

WINNIE.—1. The name Dora means "a gift." Sarah "a princess." 2. The 15th of March, 1868, came on a Wednesday.

SURLY TIM.—The making up of the public accounts to April 5th every year, is a relic of the old style, in which the date would have been March 25, or Lady Day.

R. S. F.—You cannot bring the action yourself, being under twenty-one, but your father can as your next friend.

ALANNA.—It took Cromwell and Ireton from 1649 to 1650 to reduce the Irish to subjection and obedience, and it was not done without a great deal of bloodshed. The "Cromwellian Settlement" is a byword even at the present day.

BERTIE.—The Standard of Gold is twenty-two parts gold to two of copper or silver out of twenty-four; of silver thirty-seven parts of pure silver, and three parts copper out of forty.

CHARLIE'S DARLING.—1. The young man is probably over head-and-ears in love with you; but he may be only chaffing. 2. Fair handwriting, but will bear improvement. Write a little larger, and more regularly.

ROBIE.—The use of high heels is not at all to be recommended. The most comfortable heel for walking is a broad, flat one. There should also be plenty of room in the forepart of the shoe for the play of the foot.

ALONZO THE BRAVE.—The girl is simply laughing at you. You must have had very little experience of the sex if you think one of them can be won by such feeble half-hearted measures as you adopt. Unless you show a little more spirit some bolder avain will step in and snatch the prize from your hands.

C. D. A.—Mother Shipton was a famous fortune-teller who lived in England in the reign of Henry VIII. She may have made some successful guesses, but some at least of the prophecies attributed to her were written after the event. She is said to have foretold correctly the deaths of Cardinal Wolsey and the Earl Percy.

A LITTLE QUIZ.—1. An agreeable looking young lady with good features. 2. Tell your friend to be very careful what kind of corset she wears, and to avoid tight lacing as she would the plague. 3. Apply glycerine to the face and hands when you retire for the night, and continue the practice till the desired result is attained. 4. Keep your hair cut regularly about once a month, and apply a stimulating lotion such as cantharides and sweet oil. Any chemist will make it up for you. 5. Very untidy and careless handwriting. Take more pains and practise from a good copy at least an hour a day, and you will soon acquire a good and fashionable hand.

W. F. K.—Fishing nets are generally made of hemp or flax twine, but some are made of cotton and some of jute and other materials. The threads are not woven across each other close together as in cloth, but wide apart, so as to make square holes called meshes, each thread being fastened where it crosses another one by a kind of knot. The size of the meshes and of the twine differs in different kinds of nets. They are chiefly made by machinery now. Fishermen, as a rule, use only the seine, drift, and trawl nets. Some seine nets are nearly a fifth of a mile long. The drift net is made like the seine, but has no leads at the bottom. The trawl net is a kind of drag net for catching fish which swim near the bottom. It is usually dragged along by the fishing boat.

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